Gandhi Memorial College of Education Bantalab Jammu

HISTORY OF KASHMIR & ITS PANDITS

Edited By

Dr. Ashok Raina

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Memorial College of Education Bantalab Jammu

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- Prof. Tej Nath Dhar
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- Dr. Ashok Raina
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HISTORY OF KASHMIR AND ITS PANDITS

Edited By

Dr. Ashok Raina

G.M. College of Education
Rainpur, Bantalab
Jammu.
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COVER

These are not just pictures; they tell a story of the original inhabitants of Kashmir, from their days of glory to the total destruction of their life and property carried out in the name of a religion.

Top left: Artist's concept of the Sun Temple at Martand, built by King Lalitaditya Muktapida during the 8th century CE. It represented the most striking example of ancient Hindu architecture in the Kashmir valley.

Top right: Ruins of the temple that was destroyed during the reign of Sultan Sikandar Shah Miri (1389-1413 CE), also known as 'Sikandar Butshikan'. It took his special team one year to accomplish their nefarious goal.

Bottom left: The house of a Kashmiri Pandit situated on the banks of the Vitasta (Jhelum) River prior to the exodus of 1990. Such houses were looted, burnt, purchased as distress sales, or simply taken over by members of the majority community.

Bottom right: Life in a refugee camp around Jammu. The Pandit lady is contemplating her losses while facing the intense heat, medical problems and uncertain future.

Center: Lalitaditya Muktapida (724-761 CE) was one of the greatest kings, not only of Kashmir but of India. The boundaries of his empire stretched from Iran in the west to Tibet in the East, from Turkestan in the north to the Gangetic Plains in the south and to Bengal in the southeast. The rule of Lalitaditya is correctly considered the 'Golden Age' in Kashmir's history.

Cover designed by Ashok Raina and painted by Ravi Dhar

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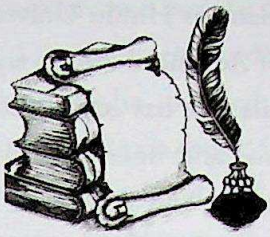

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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particularly the loss of habitats and the threat to the biodiversity of the Kashmir Himalayas. He has written two popular science books titled *Fitratik Rang* (Kashmiri) and *Man and Environment*, under the auspices of the Society of Popularization of Science, which he founded in 1994. He published his memoir, *My Kashmir in Peace and Turbulence,* in 2019. Prof. Kaul received the coveted World Food Award of the Food and Agriculture Organization in 1991. He was elected a Fellow by the Linnean Society of London in 2003 for his contributions to Natural History.

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University, where he taught and researched and rose to be its director. He is an outstanding scholar in his field, with nearly half a dozen books to his credit. He is a recipient of awards from the President and Vice President of India, besides being the holder of the prestigious Padma Shri award of India. He is also the President of the Asian-Eurasian Human Rights Forum, an NGO with the ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) special status.

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Tikoo, Tej K.: Col Tikoo was born and brought up in Srinagar. Besides being a veteran of the 1971 Indo-Pak war, he has served extensively in counter-insurgency environments in Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, Punjab, Sri Lanka and later in J&K. An alumnus of Defense Services Staff College, Col Tikoo was awarded a Ph.D. in Defense Studies by C.C.S. University, Meerut, in 2012. He is the author of the much-acclaimed book, *Kashmir: Its Aborigines and Their Exodus.* In 2021, he authored another book dealing with the life of the legendary Major Bob Khathing, the man who prevented China from grabbing NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh). From 2015 to 2018, he was the Editor-in-Chief of NAAD. He has also been the President of the Kashmiri Migrant Welfare Association, NOIDA (2011-2015) and All India Kashmiri Samaj (2018-2021). He is also a founder-member of *Bharat Sampark.* Col Tikoo has been regularly appearing on various national and international television channels during debates on issues dealing with Kashmir, Indo-Pak relations, national security, and international relations.

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FOREWORD

The Valley of Kashmir has been a hotspot in the world for the last seventy-five years, a victim to the geo-political rivalries that arose after the Second World War. Pakistan waged three wars to snatch it from India and used random killings through proxy groups to create disorder. One of the great tragedies of modern history occurred in Kashmir just over thirty years ago when the community of Pandits was compelled to leave their ancestral homes after a campaign of terror waged against them by the Islamists.

To put recent events in Kashmir in a historical context, the well-known scholar-scientist Ashok Raina has edited *History of Kashmir and Its Pandits,* with contributions by leading scholars. This excellent book on the political and cultural history of Kashmir starts with a summary of the land's geological history and geography and an overview of its political history that provides the background to the tragedy that befell the Kashmiri Pandit community.

Further contributions in the book include chapters on the Islamic period, the rule by the Dogras during the British times, the invasion of Kashmir in 1947 by Pakistan, the politics of post-independence Kashmir, and genocide in the 1990s, with material on several unique aspects of the culture of the Pandits. The last chapter speculates on whether their culture will survive now that they are scattered in far corners of the world.

What's past is a prologue, so we must look at Kashmir's history for clues for the future. Kashmir is famous for its natural beauty and scholarship. For over a thousand years until the early fourteenth century, it was one of the most creative places on earth with outstanding contributions to the arts, music, aesthetics, sciences, literature and philosophy that are all of abiding interest. Its

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emphasis on aesthetics and beauty to find meaning in life resonates with a modern sensibility.

The philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism, which arose nearly twelve hundred years ago, is a recasting of Vedic wisdom into a positively defined pure Vedanta. It declares *caitanyam ātmā*, or "consciousness is the *ātman*", and it sees Shiva as consciousness present in each being. Considering the physical universe as the embodiment of Shiva teaches that a person can obtain self-knowledge while being a person of action and part of the world. This understanding makes it possible to speak and debate the nature of self in direct terms. It was a powerful idea that Kashmiris took across the Himalayas to the east (China and Japan) and west (Central Asia and the Slavic world). Kashmir Shaivism's approach to the problem of consciousness is celebrated across the world, for it represents the frontiers of science and psychology.

Kashmir Shaivism is at the foundation of practised Buddhism in the Far East. *Nīlakaṇṭha Dhāraṇī*, a Sanskrit chant popular in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, is a recitation by *Avalokiteśvara*, the highest Bodhisattva, in praise of the compassion shown by *Harihara* (Vishnu and Shiva), especially as Shiva who drank *halāhala* poison at the churning of the ocean to save the world.

The political boundaries of Kashmir have, on occasion, extended much beyond the Valley and the adjoining regions. Sharada Peeth, the great center of Kashmiri learning and a repository of manuscripts, was at the northwest corner of the Valley, less than 200 miles north of the ancient Taxila University.

Kashmir's nearness to rich trade routes brought it considerable wealth and provided the resources to Kashmiris to take Sanskrit culture out of the country as missionaries. Kashmiris also became interpreters of Indian civilization, and they authored many fundamental synthesizing and expository works.

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The *Rājataraṅginī* (River of Kings), written in about 1150 AD, gives a narrative of successive dynasties that ruled Kashmir, providing the human angle to political events that are framed by pride, greed, envy, and ambition.

The old Kashmir of universal wisdom may have died with the exodus of the Pandits in 1991, but one can hope that in the coming decades, as Kashmiris in the Valley begin to search for answers to the deepest questions of life and meaning, some of them will return to the teachings of Kashmir's own great sages. One can also hope that the political situation in the Valley will further improve and some of the displaced Pandits will be able to return.

Padma Shri Professor Subhash Kak
Stillwater, Oklahoma
April 2023

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INTRODUCTION

I had never been a serious student of history. I did have history as a subject in high school, and if I remember correctly, it covered the entire Indian history with a brief account of the history of Jammu and Kashmir. My real interest in knowing the history of Kashmir was kindled when in 1992, I read *My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir* by Governor Jagmohan. After that, I felt the urge to produce a book on the history of Kashmir that would be different from all the previous ones—a book that would primarily be meant for our future generations, keen to know about their past. Being a Kashmiri Pandit, my interest was to emphasize the evolution of our ethnic community and the fate it suffered, particularly during the past six centuries. History is more often like a painting that reflects the painter's mindset in depicting a scene. The readers, on the other hand, look at it as a canvas showing the object in its true colors and dimensions. Since I am not a professional historian, I could not tackle this project by myself. I made an outline of the chapters that would constitute this work. Then I started looking for potential authors who would each write these chapters. My explicit instruction to all the authors was: whereas we may have genuine biases, the contributions should, as far as possible, be fact-based.

With so many authors contributing different chapters, it was hard to avoid overlaps and duplication. A unique feature of this book is that besides traditional history, it deals with the geological events leading to the formation of the Kashmir Valley as part of its ancient history.

The legendary tales about the formation of Kashmir Valley, which most local people believe, appear to be based on geological facts except for the timeline. The Valley, which was a lake, got drained by natural causes about 85 thousand years ago. The last ice age ended around 11,700 years ago. Prior to that, the

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place must have been extremely cold and essentially uninhabitable for humans. However, archaeological evidence based on the recovery of stone tools indicates that humans may have inhabited Kashmir as far back as the middle Paleolithic era or 50,000 years ago. The earliest known inhabitants of the Valley were Nagas and *Pishachas,* who lived on the hills and around the springs (*nag* in Kashmiri), worshiped elements of nature and did not follow an organized religion. When later settlers arrived in the Valley, they brought with them both Buddhism and Hinduism. Although there were ideological differences between the two religions, they often co-existed. Many of the earlier intruders into Kashmir, like the Huns and Kushans, did not have a religion of their own and adopted whatever was being practised locally.

For the earliest rulers of Kashmir, the major problem we (the authors) faced was to set right the chronology of the kings. The only information available about the pre-history was *Rajatarangini,* written by Kalhana in 1150 CE. Prior to that, all accounts of history were primarily transmitted orally. Sources, as exalted as the Greek philosopher Socrates himself, had been convinced that writing would introduce forgetfulness into the souls of those who learn it, degrading the capacity of humans to remember. However, in the oral tradition, things get confusing, and facts get distorted over time. According to Kalhana, the names of the first five rulers of Kashmir were not known and the first known ruler was Gonanda I (3,238-3,188 BCE), coincident with the time of Mahabharata. There are also several subsequent gaps. A mistake that has often been repeated in subsequent and even recent publications is the case of Ashoka, who ruled Kashmir between 1448-1400 BCE. He was also known as Dharmashoka and had a son named Jalauka, who ruled after him. He is confused with the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka, who ruled from 268 to 232 BCE, almost 1200 years after the Ashoka of Kashmir. Most of the earlier kings ruled for short periods of time and suffered from royal intrigues in which siblings killed each other to acquire the throne. Kalhana has written about many instances of alleged witchcraft for eliminating rivals that could have actually involved the use of poisons. Three military factions—Tantrins, Ekangas and Dameras—supported rivalries. There are examples of treacherous

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rulers, such as Mihirakula (502-530 CE), of Hun ancestry. Harsha (1089-1101 CE), one of the kings, perhaps influenced by the Turushikas in his employ, ransacked many temples and melted their gold and silver idols to enrich his treasury. But then there were kings like Lalitaditya Muktapida (724-761 CE), the greatest ruler of all time. The most remarkable feature of Lalitaditya's conquests was that, as a Hindu king, he never destroyed the culture of the lands he conquered.

Muslims did not come to Kashmir riding horses and swords drawn. Coming from Central Asia, they were welcomed as guests by the Hindu rulers of the time. However, through domestic intrigue and encouraged by local events, they succeeded in taking over the rule of Kashmir. They precisely did so, initially with charm and later with a vengeance for over five hundred years. Not accepting Rinchen, a Bhautta from Tibet, to convert to Hinduism by the royal priests of the court and his subsequent conversion to Islam, followed by voluntary abdication by the Hindu ruling family, were some of the missteps that helped Islamists to get a firm foothold in Kashmir. A fresh convert like Suha Bhat, Islamized as Malik Saifu'd Din, as an example, was the evil force behind the destruction of everything Hindu during Sultan Sikandar's rule. The rest, as they say, is history.

The Dogra rule which lasted almost 100 years, was a relatively peaceful period with no major conflict. There was a lot of development in the state. In spite of the fact that the Valley Pandits were generally better educated, most of the senior appointments in the administration were filled by officers from outside the State. By the time Ranbir Singh, the second Maharaja, occupied the throne, the British started increasingly interfering in the affairs of the State.

Following independence, Hari Singh, the ruler of Jammu & Kashmir, remained indecisive when it came to joining India or Pakistan. That changed after Pakistan sent the Qabaili lashkars to grab Kashmir by force. The popular leader in Kashmir at the time was Sheikh Abdullah. He and his followers took a stand against Pakistan, and after India's timely intervention and great

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sacrifices by its soldiers, the lashkars were driven out, but only part of the way. A unit of the State Army led by Brigadier Rajinder Singh, who made the supreme sacrifice, delayed the advance of the raiders in Uri. Maqbool Sherwani, a civilian from Baramulla, and Brigadier Usman of the Indian Army also played key roles in preventing the Qabaili takeover of Srinagar and Rajouri, respectively. With the passage of time, Sheikh Abdullah, who had become Prime Minister of the State, changed his stance. He most likely wanted Kashmir to be an independent state with himself as its *Amir*. If that had happened, the non-Muslim minorities would have had no chance to survive in such an Islamic state. We just have to look around the neighborhood and see the fate of minorities in Muslim countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

Over the centuries, Kashmiri Pandits had encountered six exoduses. The seventh exodus that happened in 1989-'90 was clearly an attempt to ethnically cleanse the Valley of all traces of so-called infidels. This time some of the perpetrators were their own neighbors and their students. The Pandits lost all their worldly belongings and could have lost their lives, too, if they did not have access to India beyond the Pir Panjal Mountain Range. They ended up as 'refugees in their own country'. They faced enormous hardships living in camps under adverse conditions.

Kashmiri Brahmins were bestowed the *Pandit* title by the Mughal Emperor Mohammad Shah during the eighteenth century. The Kashmiri Pandits have a distinct language and unique culture. Unlike most Brahmins, the majority of them were meat-eaters, perhaps because of the harsh winters and the non-availability of vegetables during that time. There are many rituals, and most of them are unique to the Valley. Even Shivratri, an important festival among Hindus all over the world, is celebrated by them differently. Kashmiris generally were very witty and quickly made up proverbs and nicknames. Until the recent exodus, more than ninety percent of the marriages among the Pandits were performed intra-community. Genetic hazards due to inbreeding

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were avoided through strict regulations of no marriages between even distant cousins and those belonging to the same *gotra* (ancestral lineage).

The Valley of Kashmir, with its four seasons, snow-covered mountains, flowering meadows, lakes and springs, was rightly called the Switzerland of Asia. There used to be a mystic quality of life that produced many philosophers, sages and saints. This all changed over time as increasingly intolerant variations of Islam like Wahabism evolved, corrupting the minds of its followers and promoting violence against non-Muslims. Not surprisingly, after 1947, until the gun culture arrived in the Valley, we had not seen the Indian security forces involved in any punitive role. The Valley, perhaps, has changed forever.

Throughout the past nearly six centuries, Pandits have mastered the art of self-preservation. They have survived as individuals through the most adverse conditions. They found their strength in learning through education, hard work, and inner drive for success in whatever field of employment they choose. However, will Pandits ever be able to return back to their homeland? Unless the majority community accepts the Pandits as equal shareholders of Kashmir and the two communities learn to live together in peace, the Valley is going to be in perpetual turmoil, and the Pandits will continue to remain homeless.

Ashok Raina, Ph. D
Maryland, USA
April 2023

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It has been a great experience to work with ten different authors from two continents to come up with a comprehensive book on the history of Kashmir with an emphasis on Kashmiri Pandits. The cooperation I have received from various authors has been excellent.

I would like to thank my family, particularly my wife Santosh for putting up with my frequent deadlines, often at the cost of family time, for letting me complete this undertaking.

In my quest to make this book available to as many readers in our community besides libraries and reading rooms, we have purchased copies for free distribution. To make that possible several individuals made generous donations, and I thank them all.

I thank the editorial staff at Saber & Quill, who did an excellent job of editing and bringing uniformity to different chapters with different styles and spellings. In the end, I thank Colonel Ajay Raina, SM, Managing Partner of Saber & Quill, for his great interest in Kashmir-related subject matter and his utmost cooperation that was beyond the call of duty.

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Chapter 1

KASHMIR VALLEY: EVOLUTION AND PRE-HISTORY

Sundeep Pandita and Ashok Raina

Formation of Kashmir Valley: Geological Facts

About 4.6 billion years ago, our solar system was a cloud of dust and gas known as a solar nebula. Gravity collapsed the material onto itself as it began to spin, forming the sun in the center of the nebula. The remaining material began to aggregate, with smaller particles drawing together, bound by the force of gravity, into larger particles. The solar wind swept away lighter elements such as hydrogen and helium from the nearer regions, leaving only heavy, rocky materials to create rocky planets like the Earth and Mars. But farther away, the solar winds had less impact on lighter elements, allowing them to coalesce into gas giants such as Jupiter and Saturn, the Jovian planets.

The earth's interior has been divided into the crust, mantle, outer core and inner core from surface to the center (radius of the earth is ~6,371km) of the earth on the basis of density and composition. Earth's inner solid core formed first, and dense material sank to the center, while the lighter material created the crust. The planet's magnetic field probably formed around this time period. Gravity captured some of the gases that made up the planet's early atmosphere. Approximately 4.48 billion years ago (or 70–110 million years after the start of the Solar System), the Earth's only satellite, the Moon, was formed. The most common theory, known as the "giant impact hypothesis", proposes that the Moon originated after a body the size of Mars (sometimes named Theia) struck the proto-Earth, a glancing blow that catapulted pieces of the young planet's mantle into space. Gravity caused many of these pieces to

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draw together and form the moon, which took up orbit around the Earth. Recent studies indicate that Theia may have actually gotten embedded into the Earth. The first span of time extending from 4,600 to 3,800 Ma (mega annum or million years) in which the Earth existed is known as the Hadean Eon. The Hadean Eon ended with the onset of the Archean Eon, which means "beginning" or "origin". It was during this time that the Earth had cooled significantly, and the first simple unicellular life form evolved.

In the year 1912, German scientist Alfred Wegener proposed a theory he called Continental Drift. According to Wegener's theory, Earth's continents once formed a single, giant landmass, which he called Pangaea. In the 1960s, the theory of Plate Tectonics came into existence, which is an improved version of continental drift theory. This theory got universal acceptance as it explains various phenomena operating on and in the earth's crust, including mountain building, volcanoes and earthquakes and leads one to the understanding of how landforms on the earth develop. According to the Plate Tectonic theory, the Earth's crust, along with the uppermost layer of the underlying mantle (called the lithosphere), is fragmented into wandering slabs of rocks called the tectonic plates that are slowly floating on the ductile layer of the upper part of the mantle called the asthenosphere. Because of this constant movement, today's Earth looks very different from what it did millions of years ago.

Pangaea is only the most recent supercontinent identified in the geologic record. The formation of supercontinents and their dismemberment has been cyclical throughout the Earth's history. Columbia is believed to be one of the Earth's ancient supercontinents that existed approximately 2,500 to 1,500 Ma ago. Another supercontinent named Rodinia assembled between 1,100 to 900 Ma in the past and broke up between 750 to 633 Ma ago. About 200 Ma ago, the continents and oceans that exist today were clustered into a single supercontinent called Pangaea that broke up into Laurasia (northern continents of North America and Eurasia) and Gondwanaland (southern continents of South America, Africa, Antarctica, India and Australia). Laurasia and Gondwana were separated by an east-west trending ocean called Tethys.

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The Gondwana was placed deep in the southern hemisphere, and after the Gondwana broke up, India started a northward drift towards Eurasia. About 80 Ma ago, India was 6,400 km south of the Eurasian continent but moving towards it at a rate of between 9 and 16 cm per year. From about 50-40 Ma the rate of northward drift of the Indian continental plate slowed to around 4-6 cm per year. This slowdown is interpreted to mark the beginning of the collision between the Eurasian and Indian continental plates and the closing of the former Tethys Ocean. The onset of the India-Asia collision dates back to as early as 55 Ma in the westernmost part of the orogen. The geological investigations have suggested that the northwestern tip of the Indian Plate first collided with the southern side of the Eurasian Plate at about 55 Ma. By about 40 Ma ago, the two continents apparently met along the full length (~2,500 km) of the collision zone, also referred to as suture zone called as the Indus–Tsangpo or Yarlung-Zangbo suture zone and marks the northern tectonic boundary between the Tibetan Plateau (Lhasa terrane) and Himalaya (Indian Plate). Since the collision between the two plates, the southern edge of the Eurasian Plate has overridden the Indian Plate margin and the compression has resulted in the formation of Himalayan mountain ranges.

Due to the northward movement of the Indian Plate, the sediments deposited in the Tethys Ocean were subjected to powerful compression that resulted in the folding of these sediments. As the Indian Plate started plunging below the Eurasian Plate, these sediments were further folded and raised, forming big mountains. In the process, they took along fragments of oceanic sediments from the Tethys Sea to the highest peaks. These sedimentary rocks formed the mountains of the Karakoram and the Himalayan ranges, and the high Plateau of Tibet. These stratified rocks contain marine fossils, further providing geological evidence that the Himalayas rose from the Tethys Sea. Ammonites (sea animals having shells) are found in large numbers in the Kali Gandaki River in Nepal. These ribbed spiral marine creatures (also referred to as *Saligram*, a form of Vishnu) date as far back as 240-265 Ma. The sedimentary rocks embedded with a lot of marine fossils are spread over the entire Himalayas from the west in Pakistan, through Jammu and Kashmir up to the

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northeastern part of India, explaining the existence of the Tethys Ocean. One important geological feature in Kashmir Valley is the globally known Permian-Triassic Boundary lithosection at Guryul Ravine near Khrew. The marine Paleozoic and Mesozoic sedimentary rocks are well exposed there and have been studied for the existence of marine fauna. It is believed that around Permian-Triassic Boundary (251 Ma), more than 90% of marine life and about 70% of terrestrial life became extinct. This extinction is also referred to as the mother of all extinctions that happened in the life history of the earth. Various possible causal mechanisms for this mass extinction have been advocated over several decades, which include a bolide (an extremely bright meteor that exploded in the atmosphere) impact, fluctuations in oceanic salinity, increased volcanism, pronounced excursions in temperature (either strong cooling or severe warming), ocean anoxia (high concentration of carbon dioxide), sudden release of methane from the sea floor, trace element poisoning and increased cosmic radiation (Tewari et al., 2015).

The Himalayas are still rising by more than 1cm per year as India continues to move northwards into Asia, which explains the occurrence of shallow-focus earthquakes in the region today. However, the forces of weathering and erosion are lowering the Himalayas at about the same rate. The Himalayas extend for more than 2,500 km in the east-west trend and is the highest and youngest mountain range in the world, with more than 110 peaks; one of those peaks is Mount Everest (Tibetan: Chomolungma-Mother of the World; Chinese: Qomolangma Feng; Nepali: Sagarmatha – the Goddess of the Sky), the world's highest, with an elevation of 8,848 meters. The Himalayan range is divided into five tectono-stratigraphic zones: the Trans Himalaya (Karakoram-Lhasa Block) in the north, followed by the High Himalaya towards the south (Kohistan-Ladakh Batholiths), the Tethys Himalaya, the Lesser Himalaya and the Outer Himalaya. These units are structurally separated by four regional fault systems: the Indus-Tsangpo Suture Zone/Main Karakoram Thrust, the Main Central Thrust (Panjal Thrust), the Main Boundary Thrust and the Main Frontal Thrust in a north-to-south sequence.

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The Kashmir Basin came into existence around 4 Ma ago as a consequence of the ongoing orogenic activity and rise of the Pir Panjal Mountain Range that led to the impounding of the drainage system and damming of the water, which resulted in the formation of a vast lake named as "Satisar" also referred to as Karewa Lake. The Kashmir Basin (Fig. 1) is an intermontane basin occupying an oval-shaped depression between the Pir Panjal (originally known as Panchaladeva or the deity of Panchala) Range in the southwest and the Zanskar Range in the northeast. Geologically this basin hosts rocks ranging in age from Precambrian to Early Jurassic, unconformably overlain by the Karewa succession of the Quaternary age.

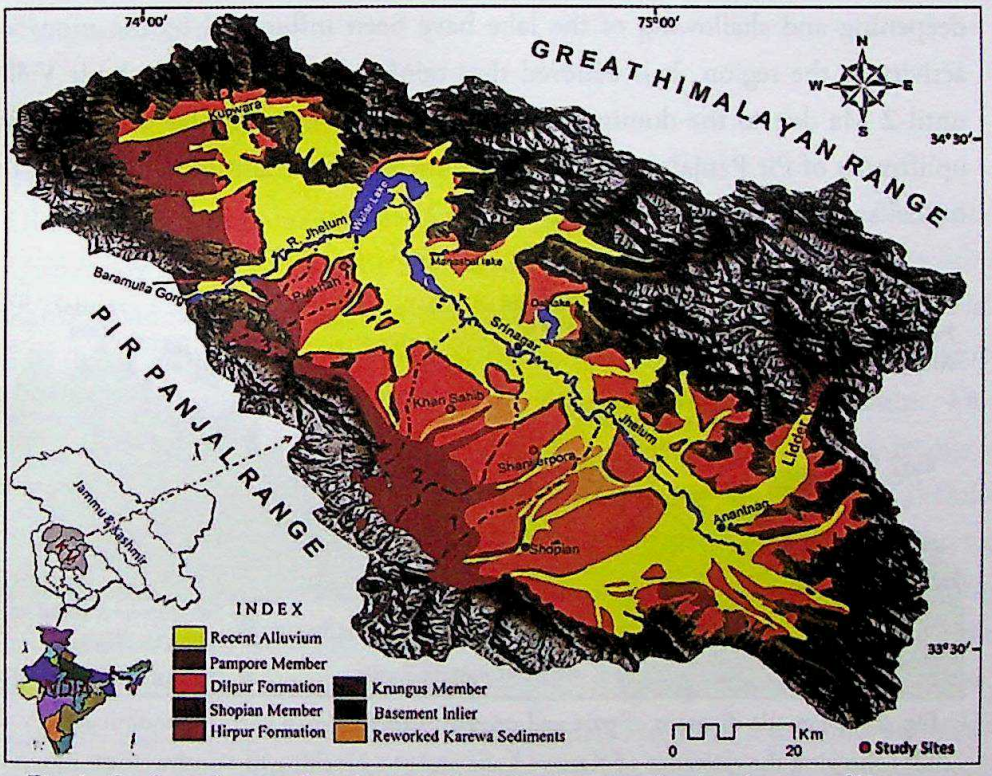

Fig. 1: Geological map of Kashmir Valley (KV)showing the distribution of Karewa Group of sediments (After Dar et al., 2015)

The continuous sedimentation in the lake created a 1,300 m thick sedimentary succession comprising clay, silt, sand and conglomerates and is called the Karewa Group. The Karewa Group has been classified into the lower Hirpur

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Formation and the upper Nagum Formation. The fluvio-lacustrine sedimentation in this extensive lake basin is believed to have started around 4 Ma ago till the Late Quaternary period. The sedimentation in the Karewa Basin has been punctuated by the presence of conglomerate horizons at different levels suggesting multiple phases of mountain-building activity surrounding the lake region.

The deposition of conglomerates indicates shallowing of the lake during phases of the uplift activity in the mountains. After deposition during the lower Karewa phase, the lake gradually started receding from the southwestern side due to the uplift and steepening of the mountain range. The alternate phases of deepening and shallowing of the lake have been influenced by the monsoon activity in the region. It is believed that rainforests existed in Kashmir Valley until 2 Ma due to the dominance of the monsoon system, and thereafter, the upliftment of Pir Panjal mountain ranges increased the altitude obstructing the Indian summer monsoon after 2 Ma (Fig. 2).

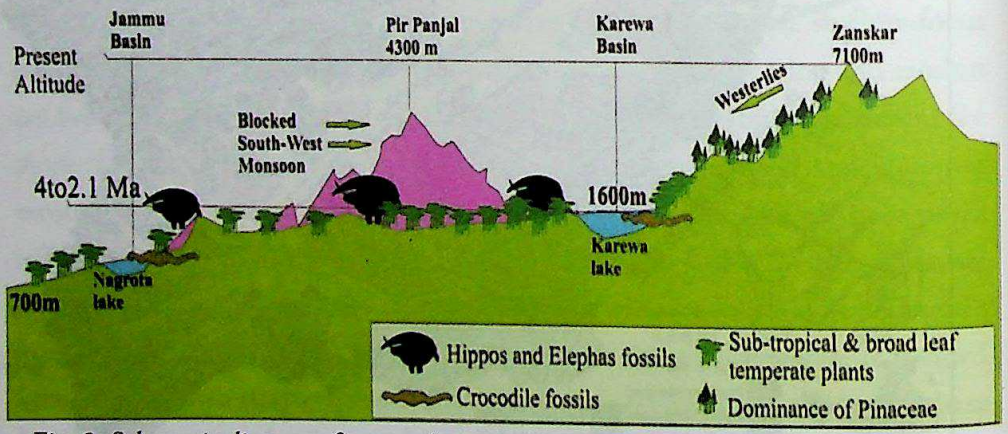

Fig. 2: Schematic diagram of past and present Karewa Basin (After Farooqui et al., 2021) showing the existence of Karewa Lake and the blocking of Southwest monsoon due to rising Pir Panjal mountains

The sediment deposition in the Kashmir Valley was dominated by a fluvial environment until around 4 Ma, with rivers flowing from higher Himalayas in the north which was followed mostly by the fluvio-lacustrine environment till around 1.95 Ma with flow direction dominantly towards the northeast. For

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about the next 0.9 Ma, the direction of the river flow remained northeast, i.e., from Pir Panjal Range. However, there was a change in the flow direction towards the northwest about 1.0 Ma ago (between 1.07 to 0.77Ma), which indicates the onset of ancestral Jhelum River flow in the basin, which later drained the lake to expose the whole of the Karewa sediments deposited in the lake. Agrawal et al. (1989) are of the opinion that the Jhelum River emerged around 85 kyr (thousand years) and drained the already shrinking lake. The change in the flow direction resulted due to tectonic activity, the uplift of the mountain range in the southeast, and the strike-slip movement along the Central Kashmir Fault, which has divided the Kashmir Basin into the topographic rise in the southwestern part and topographic depression in the northeastern part.

Geomorphic Features of Kashmir Valley

Like other intermontane basins of Himalaya, Kashmir is also a Neogene-Quaternary basin bounded by Pir Panjal Range in the west-southwest to the Zanskar Mountain Range in the east-northeast. The Zanskar thrust in the east and Panjal thrust in the west control the geomorphic expression of the region and also explain the formation of the Kashmir intermontane basin. The drainage system of the Valley has a single outlet at Baramulla, forming a topographic low of this area, i.e., Baramulla Gorge through which the Jhelum River exits the Valley. The landforms of the Valley are continuously changing due to aggradation as a result of fan deposits developed due to the bordering tributaries exiting into the Valley. The geomorphic features of the Kashmir basin are diverse and possess a landscape with huge lakes, springs, snow, glaciers and surging river systems. The elevated ranges of Pir Panjal not only initiated the deposition of Karewa sediments but also formed an orographic barrier for the southwest monsoon. Due to this orographic barrier, the Valley remained dependent on the winter precipitation. The bowl-shaped Valley is covered with numerous lakes and green meadows. The lakes present in Kashmir Valley include Dal, Wular, Gadsar, Mansabal and Gangabal. Wular (originally known as Mahapadmasar) is the largest freshwater lake in India,

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covering an area of 189 km^2 and has been declared a Ramsar site due to its tremendous ecological importance. The human settlement, farming practices, encroachments, and continuing inflow of solid waste and sediments have degraded the natural landscape and ecologically sensitive ecosystem of Wular Lake.

Little is known about the active tectonic structures present in the Valley. However, there are spectacular geomorphic features of a typical strike-slip environment which include shutter ridges, river offsets, sag ponds, and linear and strike parallel Valleys along the Shopian-Srinagar transect. The geomorphic expression of asymmetric disposition at the margin of the basin is commonly observed. The stream capturing of the Doodh-Ganga and Shali-Ganga rivers towards the Pir Panjal Range is also a distinct geomorphic expression of active tectonic structures. The great bend of Srinagar itself is a prominent offset marker which is a structurally controlled geomorphic feature. The river Jhelum shows significantly compressed meanders with high sinuosity in an upstream direction and deflated meanders with relatively low sinuosity towards the west. The elevated part of Srinagar city is also an excellent geomorphic feature, which according to the archival scribes, was devastated many times by earthquakes. Broadly, the Valley is subdivided into Jhelum Plain, Karewas and Rimlands. The Jhelum plain includes the banks, which add fresh alluvium due to flooding during rainfall and water from glaciers. The southern part of the Valley shows prominent flat-topped geomorphic features similar to the terraces, which are significantly above the flood plain of the Jhelum River and are known as Karewas. The uplands surrounding the Valley that are covered with deciduous and conifer trees in the south and north, respectively, form the Rimland. The meadows of Pahalgam, Sonamarg, Gulmarg and Yousmarg are situated in the rimlands. Besides, wetlands also constitute distinct geomorphic features which have significantly decreased due to urbanization during the last five decades.

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Kashmir Valley: A Legendary Perspective

There are good geological reasons that support the hypothesis that the Valley was once a vast lake surrounded by mountains. Some of these facts were woven into a legendary tale which was believed by the majority of local inhabitants. The story goes like this: The lake that existed was called *Satisar* or Sati's Lake, named after Sati, the consort of Shiva. Together with its surrounding mountains, the place was known as *Satidesa* or Sati's country. The people who lived on the mountains belonged to the Naga tribe. Their king, Nila, was the son of the great sage Kashyap. Nila had found a child by the lake whom he brought up and named Jaldobhava (water-born). Through intense meditation, Jaldobhava obtained a boon from Brahma that no one would be able to kill him as long as he stayed underwater. As he grew older, he became very cruel and arrogant. Nila got so frustrated with him that he approached Kashyap, who in turn sought the help of Vishnu. Vishnu asked Ananta, the divine serpent, to cause a break in the mountain near Baramulla, thereby draining the lake. Using his magical powers, Jaldobhava created darkness all around so he could not be seen. Shiva brought in light by bringing back the sun. With the water gone and light restored, Vishnu decapitated the demonic Jaldobhava with his discus. According to Frederic Drew, the famous geographer, "Sometimes traditions are valuable as showing how in early times some races of mankind had learnt to interpret the geological records of the history of their dwelling places rightly".

Geological studies indicate that the initial draining of the ancient lake occurred approximately 85 Ka-BP (thousand years before the present, set as 1950) through a single outlet of the Jhelum gorge near Baramulla. There were presumably no human settlements in the area at that time to have witnessed the event and carried forth the information. However, it is postulated that the Valley, after the initial draining, got flooded several times due to drainage impoundment caused by earthquakes.

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According to the metrical legendary and historical chronicle of the Kings of Kashmir written by Kalhana Pandit called *Rajatarangini*, one such relatively recent event happened during the reign of Avantivarman, who ruled Kashmir between 855 and 883 AD. A landslide caused by an earthquake blocked the flow of Jhelum and flooded the Valley as far south as Bijbihara. Avantivarman learned that Suyya, a medieval engineer, claimed to know of an innovative way to remove the mass of rocks that formed the dam. After Avantivarman provided him with the money, Suyya proceeded to throw handfuls of coins into the landslide area near Yaksadara (also known as *Dyargul* in local dialect) near Khadanyar, seven km downstream of Baramulla. Suyya had surmised that the promise of retrieving the coins would be sufficient to motivate onlooking villagers to work with him to clear the blocked dam[a]. Recently, it was calculated that the water that had accumulated over three or more years got drained in less than four days. It is consistent with *Rajatarangni's* description of stranded wriggling fish left behind as the water receded.

Kashmir Valley and its Geography

"Agar Firdoos Barooy-e-Zameen ast, Haminastoo Haminastoo Haminast"
(If there is paradise on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here)
-Amir Khusrau

The Kashmir Valley, also known as the Vale of Kashmir, has often been referred to as the "Paradise on Earth" and "Switzerland of Asia". The Valley is a deep asymmetrical basin with an average elevation of 1,620 meters, about 135 km long and 32 km wide. The oval-shaped Valley extends between latitudes 33°30′N to 34°40′N and longitudes 73°45′E to 75°35′E and covers an area of approximately 15,800 km^2. Its boundaries are defined by the towering Karakoram Range in the north, Pir Panjal Range in the south and west, and Zanskar Range (a continuation of the Himalayan range) in the east.

[a] An executive engineer working around Khadanyar on the Lower Jhelum Hydel Project told Ashok Raina that in 1966 he witnessed laborers finding coins with Buddhist markings while digging a tunnel in the area.

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The mountains surrounding the Valley have an average height of 3,636 meters but many peaks exceed 4,242 meters. The surrounding mountains give the Valley a somewhat moderate climate; they protect it from the blasting cold of the north as well as the scorching heat of the south. Kashmir Valley has four well-defined seasons. The spring is rather long, cold and rainy and extends from March to the middle of May. Summers are quite warm, with the temperatures in July reaching as high as 31° C. However, the nights are generally cooler. There are no summer monsoons. By August, it starts getting cooler and the fall colors impart a breathtaking look. The first snowfall occurs in late November to early December. The Valley is in the grip of winter cold until February. January is the coldest month of the year. In Kashmir, it is locally known as *Chilla-kalan,* which means a long period of cold weather. Still, the winter temperatures in Kashmir are moderate compared to northern Europe and North America.

River Jhelum, known by different names in history, runs through the length of the Valley. In Sanskrit, the river is called '*Vitasta*', in Greek as '*Hydapses*'; the Egyptian geographer Ptolemy called it *Bidaspes*, whereas the 11th century Persian scholar Al Beruni named it 'Jhelum' which continues till today. The source of river Jhelum is a spring in Verinag town in Anantnag District in the southeast of the Valley. Jhelum runs through the capital city of Srinagar, where there are seven historic bridges (more recently nine) connecting the two banks. Flowing northwest, it is joined by many tributaries before it enters Wular Lake. Jhelum finally exits the Valley through a gorge at Khadanyar, west of Baramulla town.

In its course, the river Jhelum flows through a plain of recent low-level alluvium, which is loose clay, silt, sand, and gravel that the running water has deposited on a floodplain. There are extensive elevated plateaus of this alluvial or lacustrine material which are locally called Karewas (elevated table land) or *Vudr.* Although glaciers descended to the level of the Kashmir Valley, they never filled it with ice.

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Pre-history of Kashmir (Archaeology)

The climate during the Pleistocene era (2,500,000 to 11,700 years) represents glacial (extreme cold) and inter-glacial (warm period) phases in the temperate zones and pluvial (heavy rains) and interpluvial (dry period) in the tropical region. The human culture that existed during the Pleistocene time period is referred to as Paleolithic and is divided into Lower, Middle and Upper Paleolithic on the basis of stone tools recovered as follows:

- Blade tools - Upper Paleolithic 50,000-11,700 years BP
- Flake tools - Middle Paleolithic 0.25 Ma-50,000 years BP
- Core tools - Lower Paleolithic 2.5-0.25 Ma

During the Paleolithic period, humans gathered naturally available plant food such as tubers, fruits, leaves and nuts, trapped fish and hunted wild animals.

The Neolithic time period started after the end of the Ice Age when a warm climate began to set in and led to changes in the nature of plants, animals and human culture. Several cultural changes, like the domestication of plants and animals, began around the beginning of the Holocene (11,700 years BP), though the old methods of hunting wild animals and gathering food continued. The concept of a village as a place of permanent settlement started, and people in this period began to use polished stone tools and axes. The Neolithic tools appear more refined than the crude flaked stone tools of the Paleolithic period.

The prehistoric existence of humans in the Kashmir Valley is preserved in the archaeological pieces of evidence that have been discovered in the remnants of the Karewas. The recovery of stone tools facilitated the study of the existence and development of human cultures in Kashmir. De Terra and Paterson (1939) are probably among the first investigators to report on their exploration and excavation in Kashmir. They were of the opinion that the lack of record in Kashmir about Paleolithic man, who invaded the foothills in Punjab and in Poonch during the middle Pleistocene, may be due to their inability to invade

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Kashmir due to the high Pir Panjal Mountain range and extreme cold during the ice age in Pleistocene. However, the late Paleolithic pottery and flake tools were recovered by De Terra at Sombur in Kashmir and by him and Patterson on the banks of Jhelum River in association with Neolithic pottery bearing sediment layers. Archaeological investigations in the Lidder Valley (Pahalgam) in 1928 by Grinlinton led to the recovery of an isolated handmade boulder to establish a Stone Age culture in Kashmir.

The trial excavation at Burzahom by De Terra and Paterson has shown that two culture layers existed in the area. The uppermost layer with potsherds belonged to the Buddhist period, which represents the fourth century A.D. The second layer below, with highly-polished blackware and potsherds with incised geometric designs, belonged to the late or early phase of Indus Valley cultures ranging from 3000 to 1800 B.C.

The subsequent investigations by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in 1969 led by H. D. Sankalia in the Pahalgam area discovered a massive flake and a crude hand-axe from well-stratified second glacial and interglacial times. In 1970, an ASI team led by R.V. Joshi in and around Pahalgam discovered nine more tools. Among these nine tools, two borers were identified at Ganeshpur on the left bank of Lidder, probably of the Third Glacial period. These isolated discoveries of stone tools in Kashmir further strengthened the view of the prehistoric existence of man in the Lidder Valley.

The Pleistocene prior to 11,700 years, was the most recent glacial period. The Valley must have been extremely cold and inhabitable. Upper Paleolithic stone tools have been reported from Ballapur (Shopian District) and Sukhnag, situated on Srinagar-Poonch Road. At Sombur (southeast of Srinagar), a lithic industry was discovered where the Upper Paleolithic technique was used to manufacture tools from siliceous, limestone and trap rocks, and this industry probably belonged to about 18,000 years BP (Fonia, 2021). It is believed that human settlement thrived in the Kashmir Valley between 20,000 – 18,000 years BP owing to better climatic conditions (Pant et al. 1982). Agrawal et al

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(1989) report thermophilus elements around 17 kyr, indicating a warmer climatic condition in Kashmir. The absence of archaeological shreds of evidence around the beginning of the Holocene period (11,700 years BP) may be due to the cooler climatic conditions, which may have resulted in the migration of the human population towards plains or the inability of researchers to find out the archaeological evidence. While preparing a report on the excavations at Burzahom (1960-1971), Fonia believed that the archaeological evidence so far reported were confined only to surface collection from various sites and insufficient to give a complete picture of Paleolithic culture in the Valley.

In the year 2000, a large complete elephant skull with other bones and stone tools was discovered at Galandar, Pampore, Kashmir, in a quarry by G. M. Bhat of the University of Jammu and his team. The skull was found in a sandy channel within the Pampore Member of the Nagum Formation (Upper Karewa) of the Karewa Group in Kashmir. The Pampore Member is tentatively dated to the Early to Middle Pleistocene. The lithology at the Galandar excavation site comprises laminated claystones, sandstones and some conglomerates deposited during an interglacial phase of the Middle Pleistocene when a moist and warmer climate was prevalent in Kashmir. Excavation up to 20 m along the quarry edge to the west of the skull revealed further fragmentary elephant remains and a series of 57 stone tools. Other recovered associated bones show the presence of sub-adult and a juvenile elephant and a deer bone showing percussion and cut marks from butchery (Jukar et al., 2021). The discovered fossils and stone tools are displayed in the Wadia Museum of Natural History, University of Jammu. Preliminary taxonomic investigations by A. Jukar, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, USA, highlighted that the skull is remarkably well preserved and belongs to a large adult bull elephant. On the basis of anatomical features of the skull and preliminary morphological investigations carried out on the skull and mandibles etc., he suggested that this elephant belongs to the genus *Palaeoloxodon*. The skull possesses a mix of primitive features characteristic of Early Pleistocene species of *Palaeoloxodon* in East

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Africa and the Middle East, along with most advanced features found in Late Pleistocene *P. namadicus* from Indian subcontinent and *P. antiquus* from Europe, which might suggest an age of over 500Kyr (Craig et al., 2020). The mosaic characters seen in the Galandar specimen are similar to *P. turkmenicus* from Turkmenistan and likely represent an intermediate stage in the evolution of *Palaeoloxodon* in Eurasia (Jukar et al., 2021).

The recovered stone tools, 57 in number, are basalt artefacts consisting of flake tools, flakes and cores and have been confirmed to be in situ (not reworked), tentatively belonging to the beginning of the Middle Paleolithic age. The discovery of the Galandar elephant is of great importance in understanding when humans populated this part of Asia and is also an extremely rare example of the human butchery of an elephant (Bhat, 2021). The cut marks on excavated fossils indicate the use of stone tools for the removal of flesh from the animal body. This evidence indicates that the hominids in the area had developed social traits of working and hunting together and had knowledge of fabricating stone tools. The recovery of artefacts in large numbers at the excavation site suggests the existence of the Paleolithic industry in the area. There is a concrete reason to believe that animal life congregated here for drinking water and became a target for the early hunters. *Palaeoloxodon* was a grazer, indicating that the Kashmir Valley had started to open up during the Middle Pleistocene from a more forested environment earlier and is supported by the presence of horses in the Pampore Member (Jukar et al., 2021).

Soon after the Paleolithic period, mushrooming of Neolithic cultures, a flourishing of a new stone tool industry, the introduction of agricultural practices, domestication of plants and animals and the manufacture of different types of pottery started due to better and favorable climatic conditions in Kashmir. The Neolithic remains in the Kashmir Valley are found associated with about 3m thick loess deposits formed at the top of the Karewas. Loess is a periglacial or aeolian windblown clastic sediment predominantly silt size in nature, light brown to pinkish, an unstratified homogeneous deposit. Agrawal et al. (1989) believed that in the Valley, human settlements thrived only during

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improved climatic conditions like around 18,000, 5,000-, 1,800- and 1,000 years BP indicating Upper Palaeolithic culture, Neolithic culture, Kushan culture and historical dynasties respectively.

From the above discussion, it can be fairly concluded that Kashmir Valley witnessed different phases of glacial and interglacial climatic conditions during the Pleistocene-Holocene time period and the warmer climatic conditions during interglacial phases led to the growth of Palaeolithic and Neolithic cultures. The human inhabitation of the Kashmir Valley tentatively started somewhere at the beginning of the Middle Palaeolithic time period, but there is a huge gap in recorded pieces of evidence of human settlements till the Upper Palaeolithic humans inhabited the Valley around 18,000 years and the Neolithic population grew around 5,000 years. The absence of archaeological evidence in the intervening time periods may have been either because of the cooler climatic condition developed due to the glacial phase around 10,000 years or the inability of researchers to find out the cultural sites.

The excavation by various workers has unearthed stratified cultural deposits at about four dozen prehistoric sites in Kashmir Valley. Of all these Neolithic sites, only Burzahom (Srinagar) and Gufkral (Pulwama) have been systematically excavated, although some excavation work has also been done at Kanishkapura (Baramulla). Details of the excavations at Burzahom and Gufkral are given in the appendix.

Pre-history of Kashmir (Human habitation)

Based on stone tools found in Tamil Nadu, early humans, most probably *Homo erectus*, arrived in India from Africa more than a million years ago. At about 85 Ka, the first anatomically modern humans (AMH) arrived in central India. The main phase of AMH expansion started around 50 Ka, avoiding the Himalayan region because of the glacial period. The mitochondrial gene pool of India seems to be an intricate web of complex population structures. A Genographic project by the National Geographic and IBM has put forward the

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evidence regarding the migration of the human population using recombination of DNA chromosomes and concluded that modern humans migrated out of Africa via a southern route through Arabia rather than a northern route (IBM, 2011).

The recent excavation at Rakhigarhi, Haryana, led to the recovery of important pieces of evidence and artefacts indicating a well-developed cultural society more than 5,000 years old. This site has shown evidence of wide roads, a drainage network, well-built houses and jewellery-making units, suggesting a well-planned city that thrived there (Times of India, 2022).

As stated earlier, the first known drainage of Satisar Lake happened around 85 Ka. It could have been a relatively slow process for the lake to drain completely and the land to become habitable. Even then, large bodies of water occupied the Valley in the form of lakes. However, the earth was going through a glacial period and the Kashmir region must have been extremely cold. Around 11Ka, the interglacial period or Holocene commenced and things started warming up. People have a tendency to live around bodies of water, so they chose naturally occurring springs called '*nag*' in Kashmiri to settle. However, *nag* also means a serpent in Sanskrit. These people came to be known as the Nagas. In pre-historic times, there were no organized religions, but people worshiped various forces of nature. The Naga worship seems to have been established in the Valley a long time ago. According to the *Nilamata Purana*, the Nagas were supposed to 'reside in' the lakes and springs of the Valley. The lord of all the Nagas was Nila, and his abode was Verinag, the source of Vitasta (River Jhelum). Old legends claim that Nagas could change from a human to a serpent and also live in water. It is possible that these Aborigines worshiped snakes and also developed the capability for a prolonged stay underwater to hunt for fish, just like the *Bajau* people around Indonesia, who can stay underwater for up to 13 minutes due to certain genetic adaptations. Also, living in the Valley were *Pishachas*, who appear to have been some sort of barbarians of unknown origin.

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The group of humans who had moved south settled in the Indus Valley, around many of the rivers. They came to be known as Aryans. The term Aryan (free, noble and civilized) did not have any racial connotations. They merged with the indigenous people and collectively formed the Indus Valley Civilization (IVC). Rivers create an ideal starting location as they provide the water supply for survival, agriculture, and a good source of transportation. The IVC comprised dozens of well-planned towns, including Mehrgarh, Harappa, Dholavira, Rakhigarhi and Mohenjo-Daro. The IVC started during the Neolithic period and culminated in the Bronze Age. They are thought to have been highly civilized and had advanced urban planning and technological skills. They had a writing system (as yet undeciphered) and were involved in trade with Mesopotamia and Egypt. They did not have an organized religion, as no temple-like structures or figurines depicting deities have been found in the excavated areas. The IVC declined around 1900-1500 BCE as a result of climatic changes and the drying of the Saraswati River. That is when the residents of IVC started moving east to the Gangetic plains and forming new settlements. There, too, they merged with an existing population and gave rise to the people of the Early Vedic Era (1,500 BC-1,000 B.C.). They worshipped natural forces like earth, fire, wind, rain, thunder etc., by personifying them into deities. Indra (thunder) was the most important deity. During the Late Vedic Era (1,000 B.C. - 600 B.C.) Prajapati (creator) and Vishnu (preserver) became important gods. Indra and Agni lost their significance. The importance of prayers diminished, and rituals and sacrifices became more elaborate. The priestly class became very powerful, and they dictated the rules of the rites and rituals. Because of this orthodoxy, Buddhism and Jainism emerged towards the end of this period.

The Saraswat Brahmins are Hindu Brahmins who are spread over a wide area of southern India. Presently they are mostly located in Konkan, Karnataka, Goa and Kerala. However, they seem to have some connection with Kashmir. Originally, they lived by the banks of river Saraswati in the Indus Valley, worshiped goddess Saraswati (the goddess of knowledge) and were vegetarians. When this river dried up, people moved out primarily in three groups.

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Apparently, one group settled in Kashmir in the north, the second group went to Bengal in the east, and the third group went along the west coast in the south. In winter, vegetables were unavailable in Kashmir, and the native Brahmins were meat eaters. The Saraswat Brahmins who moved there to survive must have started eating fish. Subsequently, extreme winter, famine or flooding may have forced the Saraswats to move south and retain their fish-eating character.

The AMH first appeared in the Soan Valley (western Punjab and southwest of Kashmir) before 20 Ka. Archaeological evidence indicates that AMH initially moved to Kashmir around 18 Ka, coinciding with the gradual warming prior to the interglacial period. However, it must have been still too cold to sustain a continuous living, thus forcing the people to move out or the inability of researchers to find out the cultural sites that may have existed in the region. It was only after the climatic conditions improved around 5,000 B.C., that Kashmir once again became habitable. The radiocarbon evidence suggests the movement and development of the Neolithic culture in the Kashmir Valley in the second half of the fourth millennium B.C. These settlers occupied the western part of the Valley around Kanishkapura and then moved towards central Kashmir. According to Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, the first known king of that era was Gonanda I (3,238 -3,188 B.C.). Since Gonanda was known to be related to King Jarasandh of Magadh, he possibly came from the Gangetic plain. It is very likely that he, together with his clan and followers, moved to Kashmir before he assumed the kingship. In the chronology of kings of Kashmir, as presented by Kalhana, there is a gap of 1289 years after Gonanda II. One of the possibilities for this gap is because the inhabitants of the Kashmir Valley had to move out either due to adverse climatic conditions or wholescale flooding caused by damming as a result of an earthquake at the point where Satisar had initially drained. The only people that may have survived could have been the Nagas, who continued to live in the hills surrounding the Valley.

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Kashmir has largely shown the absence of the Mesolithic culture. The Neolithic culture of Kashmir is represented by nearly four dozen archaeological sites dotting the landscape. The Kashmiri language belongs to the Dardic group of languages spoken in the vast area that borders Kashmir's north and northwest. According to the available evidence, *Nag*-worship was in vogue from Khotan through Chilas to Punjab since very early times. Around 1,500 B.C., another wave of immigration and settlements is substantiated by the presence of a new culture alongside the old one. The Aryan culture was obviously a syncretic culture drawn from various civilizations, including their homeland, namely Central Asia. Achaemenian rule continued in Kashmir for about 200 years, paving the way for huge Iranian influences. It would be significant to mention that the Achaemenians introduced writing in India and also their script Aramaic. The Kharosthi script, which became common in Kashmir, was also carved out of Aramaic. The profound influence of Zoroastrianism, of which we find deep imprints on the culture of ancient Kashmir, is also because of this connection.

Towards the beginning of the third century B.C., the mighty Mauryan empire was established and with its occupation of Gandhara, Kashmir became a part of this empire. Kashmir underwent a remarkable development not only because it was integrated with an international market but also because it was greatly benefited by the great civilization which emerged in Central Asia on account of the synthesis of the most developed civilizations of the time, namely, Chinese, Greek, Iranian and Indian. Kashmiri culture became a mini-global culture. This is evident from the Harwan tiles, which according to Percy Brown, "represent half a dozen ancient civilizations besides the other indigenous cultures". The Kashmiri masses became familiar with the money currency for the first time during this period. This is evident from the Kashmiri word *diyar* used for money currency. Diyar is the Kashmirized version of Greek Dinarus.

Whereas prior to the 6th century A.D., Kashmir remained more gravitated to Central Asia, the situation changed then onwards as we find Kashmir being equally influenced by Indian culture. Although the Huns belonged to Central

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Asia, they, while remaining in the Indian environment, were thoroughly influenced by the Indian culture, which is evident from their personal names. Little wonder then that we find either Shaivism or Vaishnavism as the dominant religious traditions of Kashmir. In 200 BC, Kashmir became a settlement of Indo-Greeks, as is confirmed by the finds excavated at Semthan in Vijabror, about 45 km from Srinagar. If one was to look at the genetic makeup of the present-day population of Kashmir, it would probably show a complex mixture of many races from many regions. Similarly, the culture and the language in Kashmir developed by adopting whatever came it's way.

Appendix

Burzahom

Burzahom (34°10'N; 74° 52'E) is about 16 km northeast of Srinagar city at an elevation of about 1,800 meters above msl in the Srinagar District. The site is a unique, comprehensive storyteller of life between 3,000 BCE and 1,000 BCE. The '*Burz*' in the local Kashmiri language is the name for the bark of the birch tree, a species of Betulaceae family that generally grows in the Himalayan region (3,000-4,200 m). It was discovered in the excavated site and confirms the existence of birch trees during the Neolithic period in the vicinity. During the investigation of the Himalayan glaciation and to unravel the Pleistocene history of early man in India, the Neolithic site at Burzahom was discovered in 1935 by De Terra and Paterson of the Yale-Cambridge expedition. This first limited exercise of excavation at Burzahom was carried forward by T. N. Khazanchi from the Archaeological Survey of India. The extensive and systematic excavations during 1960-1971 by Khazanchi revealed a fourfold cultural sequence beginning with the Aceramic Neolithic, followed by Ceramic Neolithic, the Megalithic and the Historical periods. In light of its distinctive structural features and discovery of tools made of bones and stones, and common cultural traits in the region of South Asia, the Burzahom site has been named as the Northern Neolithic Culture. The Carbon dating has established

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that the Neolithic culture at this site was prevalent before 2,357 BCE (Kaw, 2004). However, Sharma (2,000) reports the oldest settlement in Burzahom dates back to about 4,315 ± 115 years BCE.

The Aceramic Neolithic period is represented by underground dwelling pits with deposits including polished bone and stone artefacts. People subsisted on both food gathering and cereal farming during this period. In the earliest remains of pit burial, oval pits were dug into the house floor and were plastered with lime and bodies were placed with red ochre. The Ceramic Neolithic period IIA is represented by the use of handmade pottery like thick, coarse grey ware, fine grey ware, and gritty dull red ware, and the domestication of wild animals such as dogs, sheep, and goats. The Ceramic Neolithic period IIB marks a distinct change in tool making as double-edged picks, spindle whorls, spear-heads, copper arrowheads, harvesters, celts, and knife blades were introduced. The roofs of dwelling pits were raised above the ground level, and timber was used in these structures. Other notable finds of this period are two engraved stone slabs found fixed in a rectangular structure facing downwards, suggesting acquaintance of art. One of these depicts a hunting scene, while the other shows an incomplete pattern generally identified as tectiform (Pande 1971, 1972). The use of items like pendants, beads, terracotta bangles, etc., suggest cultural and commercial contacts with the people of neighbouring regions of present-day Pakistan, the Tibetan Plateau and other Sub-Himalayan areas (Fonia, 2021).

During the succeeding Megalithic Period (Period III) the megalithic menhirs and rubble masonry were used in addition to the earlier existing practices. The settlers of this very period erected large stone menhirs in honour of their dead ones. A notable addition in pottery was the wheel turned dull red ware. Carnelian, agate, wooden beads and terracotta bangles were the ornaments of this period and weaving of finer woollen clothes had started. During the Early Historical Period, mud-brick structures and rubble walls were used, and the structures directly lay over the structures of the Megalithic Period, indicating the continuation of habitation at the Burzahom site. The Megalithic period

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was followed by the Early Historical Period, which could be dated around the 3rd- 4th century CE.

The reported discovery of artefacts, architecture and rituals at Burzahom indicates that the local population had established contact with Central Asia, Southwest Asia, Gangetic plains and peninsular India. Some historians are of the opinion that the Vedic Aryan culture extended into Kashmir, but archaeological investigation at Burzahom does not support the "Aryans in Kashmir" theory (Kaw, 2004).

The rock carving found in Burzahom, depicting a hunting scene along with two very bright objects in the sky (Khazanchi, 1969), has been reinterpreted by Joglekar et al. (2006). Based on the active period of the archaeological site dated to between 5000 BCE to 1500 BCE (Sharma, 2000), they opined that the rock art depiction at Burzahom is a sky chart of a supernova (a star that has exploded, strongly increasing its brightness for a few months) and also suggesting that this is probably the oldest record of supernova and sky chart found in the Indian Subcontinent.

Gufkral

The archaeological site at Gufkral (33°53'45.67"N, 75°5'40.54"E) is situated near Bonmir village on Awantipur-Dadsar-Tral Road in Pulwama District of Jammu and Kashmir. Gufkral, literally in the local Kashmiri language, means *guf-* cave and *kral-* potter. It has been named so as some of these caves were recently occupied by the local potters for the storage of their finished pottery. The site is located on a 35m high mound of upper Karewa deposit and was first reported in 1962-63 but was excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1981. The top of the mound measures 400 m long north-south and 75 m wide east-west and has a number of caves, both single and multi-chambered, with pillars.

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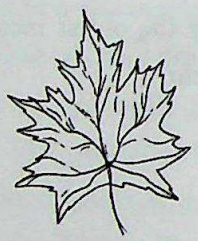
The excavations yielded five periods of occupation levels: Period IA represents Aceramic Neolithic; Period 1B Early Neolithic; Period 1C Late Neolithic; Period II Megalithic and Period III is historical in character (Sharma, 1981). The excavations at Gufkral not only confirmed the threefold cultural sequence (Aceramic, Ceramic and Megalithic periods) as reported at Burzahom but provided new evidence of the growth and evolution of Neolithic culture in three phases labelled as the Period IA, IB and IC (Thapar, 1987).

Though the initial domestication of animals had started during Aceramic Neolithic times but complete domestication of animals and a well-settled life with agriculture, cattle breeding and herding and weaving of woollen cloth became the way of life during late Neolithic period 1C (period II at Burzahom). The pattern of settlement during this time period changed from dwelling pits to shelters constructed of mud or mud bricks over the ground.



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Chapter 2

ANCIENT KASHMIR

Tej N Dhar

There are only two major sources of Kashmir history pertaining to the earliest known rulers: *The Nilamata Purana*, compiled by an unknown author(s) between 500 to 600 CE and *Rajatarangini* (River of Kings) written by Kalhana Pandit around 1,150 CE. The first one deals mostly with the life of common beings, and the second with kings and their courts. During the reign of Muslim kings in Kashmir, three supplements to *Rajatarangini* were written by Jonaraja (1,389-1,459 CE), Srivara, and Prajyabhatta and Suka.

The early phase of the Hindu rule in Kashmir, i.e., from the earliest recorded time to the middle of the Karkota dynasty, has two main aspects. Though *Rajatarangini* has been universally regarded as a monumental and ground-breaking work of historiography in India, there is a qualitative difference between its early and later parts, possibly because, for the early parts, Kalhana had to rely on the writings of his predecessors. This part is patchy, marked by big gaps and chronological confusion, and invariably intermixed with varied kinds of mythical details.

The second aspect is that this period witnessed the coexistence of Buddhism and the two variants of Hinduism: Shaivism and Vaishnavism. Since Kalhana's work is a linear account of the kings in a chronological sequence, references to Buddhism occur in it in relation to the rulers who embraced Buddhism. Because of this, the rise and slow fading away of Buddhism in Kashmir does not get the attention that it deserves. Fortunately, there are other sources available on this, such as the accounts of travelers who moved between

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China and Kashmir, historical accounts like Taranath's *History of Buddhism in India*, and new research by scholars on the rise and decline of Buddhism. All these help in knowing its growth and development in Kashmir in some detail.

This chapter has two parts: Part A is about the rulers of Kashmir from the earliest recorded time to the time of Lalitaditya, and Part B is about the rise and gradual fading away of Buddhism in Kashmir.

Part A

One needs to bear in mind that Kalhana's work is unlike the histories written in our time, which not only deal with political events but also with the manifold activities of the common masses. In Kalhana's time, historical accounts were written in a poetic form and called *Kavyas*. They observed all the requirements of such a form in which the focus was primarily on the rulers. The writing adhered to a convention-bound format and began with an invocation to gods and goddesses to help the poets with their work. Kalhana invokes Shiva, which confirms that Shaivism was the dominant religion of his times.

Kalhana writes with affection about the land, which is truly heart-warming. He calls it a place with a sacred geography "where there is not a space as large as a grain of sesamum without a holy place". He further writes that "the place is famous for its learning, lofty houses, saffron, icy water and grapes; things that even in heaven are difficult to find are common there". According to Kalhana, the names of the first five kings (3,450-3,238 BCE) are not known. His historical account begins with Gonanda I (3,238-3,188 BCE), who was a contemporary of King Yudhishthira of the Mahabharata fame. Since Gonanda I was related to Jarasandha, the king of Magadha, he accepted the latter's request to help Kansa, the king of Mathura, in his war against the Yadavas. Though he fought valiantly, he was killed by Krishna's elder brother Balarama. Gonanda's son Damodara inherited the throne after him, but he was so upset

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by his father's death that only taking revenge against the Yadava brothers would help him to be at peace with himself. When Damodara heard that the Yadavas were to attend the wedding of the daughter of the king of Gandhara (present-day Kandahar, Afghanistan), he went there to fight them. There he was killed by Krishna. On Krishna's advice, Damodara's wife, Yashovati, was put on the vacant throne of Kashmir to become the first known female ruler of Kashmir. Several nobles and chiefs did not like the move but would not dare go against Krishna, especially because Yashovati was pregnant and likely to give a new ruler to the kingdom. When she gave birth to a male child, he was named Gonanda II. Kalhana provides only one detail about him: that during the war between Kauravas and Pandavas, he was too young to fight on either side. Recent studies based on archaeo-astronomy indicate that the Mahabharata war took place in 3,067 BCE, which approximately coincided with the era of Gonanda II. Subsequently, he, too, was killed in a battle with Parikshit (grandson of Arjuna), the king of Hastinapur, in 3,083 BCE. As Gonanda II had no heir at the time of his death, Parikshit took over the kingdom of Kashmir, incorporated it into his empire and handed it over to Haranadeva, who was from his family. However, Gonanda II's mother, Yashovati, along with her pregnant daughter-in-law, escaped and took shelter in the kingdom of Videha. For the next almost 1,300 years, their descendants failed to regain their kingdom of Kashmir.

According to Kalhana, there were 34 kings belonging to the Pandava dynasty who ruled Kashmir for a period of 1,289 years until Lava (1,752 -1,713 BCE) took over and restarted the Gonanda dynasty. He was followed by seven rulers (1,713-1,447 BCE), the last of these being Sachinara. Then came the first notable king Ashoka (1448-1400 BCE), also known as Dharmashoka. Some western historians claim that the Ashoka of Kashmir was the same as the Ashoka of Maghada (268-232 BCE). If we were to give credence to Kalhana's chronological calculations for this period, we should have to place Ashoka of Kashmir at least 1,200 years before Ashoka of Magadha. Ashoka of Kashmir built the town of Girinagari (a town skirted by mountains), near the present-day Pandrethan (about 9 kilometres south of Srinagar). He was an ardent

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worshiper of Shiva and built the shrine of Vijeshvara (in present-day Bijbehara) and a great temple at Bhuteshvara (Naran Nag) dedicated to Shiva. He lost his kingdom to *Malechas* (Greeks: referred to as people of foreign extraction in ancient India) and fled to the forests. He is also supposed to have prayed for begetting a son who would be able to drive the *Malechas* out of his land.

The son of Ashoka of Kashmir was Jalauka (1,400-1,344 BCE). After he became the king, he defeated the hordes of *Malechas*. He is also known for having set up an efficient administrative system in his kingdom, with departments of justice, revenue, treasury, army, foreign affairs, and even astrology. He modelled his kingdom on the pattern of King Yudhishthira. Jalauka was a staunch follower of Vedic-Nilmata cult, especially the Krama-Tantrism of Kashmir. He set up many *Agraharas* (villages given to Brahmins for their maintenance). Jalauka was followed by Damodara II (1,344-1,294 BCE), who led a life of virtue and enjoyed Shiva's favors. He founded a city that came to be known as Damodar-*Vudder* (currently the site of Srinagar airport). He is associated with the building of a dam, with which he wanted to bring water into his town.

Damodara's reign was followed by that of Abhimanyu I, who, too, was a follower of Shiva. There was also a steady erosion of the rites associated with the land. In what appears like a mythic detail, Kalhana mentions that this angered the Naga-deities, who sent down destructive snowstorms. However, the Brahmins survived because of some miraculous power. Chandradeva, a known Brahmin of the times, practised austerities to please the Naga-deities and put an end to the snowstorms. Kalhana states that another gap of 1,266 years was occupied by about 50 kings whose details he could not trace. Newer calculations point to a gap of about 2,000 years between the epic war and the reign of the next known ruler, who belonged to the Gonanda dynasty.

Gonanda III is said to have begun his rule in 1182 BCE. According to Kalhana, he is known to have restored the ancient Naga pantheon and the Nilmata practices under a virtuous rule. Gonanda III was followed by several

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kings, notable among them being Vibhishana I, Indrajit, Ravana, and Vibhishana II.

Then followed the rule of Nara I (991-952 BCE). During his rule, great calamities were witnessed in the land because of what Kalhana calls his "baneful influence of sensuality". In addition, the desecration of holy shrines was naturally looked upon as provoking divine vengeance. The legendary account of the destruction of Narapura (established by Nara I) by the Naga chieftain Susravas is a case in point. It so happened that an ascetic seduced the king's wife by using magic. In his anger, the king burnt thousands of their *viharas,* and the villages that were meant for their upkeep were given to the Brahmins. Nara was also responsible for the destruction of towns and villages near present-day Bijbihara, including the famous temple known as Chakradhara.

There are many such stories in Kalhana's account, and they call for serious attention because they illustrate an interesting feature of the times that Kalhana writes about. Even though the Nagas had become a part of the past of the place, their activities continued to color the historical imagination of the people of the time. They believed that the Nagas could interfere in the world of humans and thus influence the very movement of time. Because of this, the chroniclers, too, felt compelled to incorporate details related to them in their accounts. One could even say that their approach to the writing of history reflects the divine interpretation of history, and that the movement of time is sometimes directed by forces beyond human control.

Another important aspect of this, which is different from the idea of the divine interpretation of history, has been stated by the historian P. N. K. Bamzai. He believes that these stories point to the fact that the tribes of the Nagas, the original inhabitants of the Valley, were involved in a long struggle with those who came from the outside to settle in their abode. Though the outsiders eventually stayed for good, the Nagas continued to assert themselves periodically by challenging the new rulers.

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Siddha (952-892 BCE) learnt many lessons from the fate of his father, Nara I. He was a devotee of Shiva, and many pious acts are associated with his rule. He was succeeded by his son Utpalaska, and the succession from father to son continued with Hiranyaksa, Hiranyakula and Vasukula. About them, Kalhana only states the number of years they ruled the place. There is yet another gap that is largely unaccounted for about the rulers of Kashmir.

Around 304 BCE, Kashmir became a part of the Mauryan Empire but was still under the Gonanda kings. Buddhism was introduced into the Valley in a big way during this period. Indo-Greek kings ruled Kashmir directly or indirectly for about 200 years. Among them, Meanander (175-150 BCE), who had converted to Buddhism, is considered one of the finest rulers of that time. After him, Kalhana mentions the Kushan kings Kanishka, Huska and Juska. The name, Kushan, derives from the Chinese term Guishang, used in historical writings to describe one branch of the Yuezhi—a loose confederation of Indo-European people who had been living in northwestern China until they were driven west to Bactria. Kanishka (127-151 CE), the fourth Kushan king, was the most powerful ruler of the Kushan Empire. The capital of his empire was Purushapura (present-day Peshawar). Under his rule, Kushan Empire extended from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan all the way to Mathura. His territory also included Kashmir, where there was a town, Kanishkapur, named after him not far from the Baramulla Pass, which still has the base of a large stupa.

As a patron of Buddhism, Kanishka is chiefly noted for having convened the fourth great Buddhist council in Kundalvana in Kashmir, which was chaired by Vasumitra. During this council, the consolidation of Buddhist texts took place, and the commentaries were engraved on copper sheets. Buddhism was divided into two sects, the Hinayana and the Mahayana. Kanishka was a tolerant king, and his coins show that he honored the Zoroastrian, Greek and Hindu deities as well as the Buddha. He was the founder of the Shaka Era (78 CE). The scholars who resided in Kanishka's court included Vasumitra, Asvaghosa, Nagarjuna and Parsva. Kanishka patronized experts of traditional Indian medicine (Ayurveda) such as Charak and Sushruta, who are still considered

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amongst the greatest scholars of the ancient Indian school of medicine. Surprisingly, ancient Greek medicine (Unani) has much in common with this Indian system of medicine.

Following Kanishka's rule, there is once again a lot of confusion about the chronology of the kings who ruled Kashmir. However, there is an interesting story associated with the kings of that period. According to sources that have followed Kalhana, there was a king known as Pravarsena (also called Tunjina) who ruled from 496-502 CE. He had identical twin sons named Hiranya and Toramana. In his sons, Pravarsena had observed what is known as the 'Twin Telepathy Effect', whereby if one child would get sick, the other child showed similar symptoms. To avoid future conflicts, Pravarsena had passed an order that after his death, both his sons would rule by turns. When it was Hiranya's turn, he imprisoned Toramana in a distant cave but provided him with all the comforts, including good food. At the time of his imprisonment, Toramana's wife, Anjana, was pregnant. She ran away to save herself and her unborn child. After the child was born in hiding, he was named Pravarsena II. Fourteen years later, Hiranya, who had no child of his own, got sick and died. At about the same time, Toramana also died. After Hiranya's death, Harshvardhan appointed Matrigupta as the ruler of Kashmir. He ruled for five years. After he renounced the throne, Pravarsena II took over the kingship.

According to a more acceptable version, Toramana was a White Hun whose father had invaded India. The Huns were a violent tribe that swarmed countries and indulged in killing, looting and other barbaric acts to spread terror. Entering through the Hindu Kush pass, the Huns attacked India during the reign of the Gupta kings somewhere in the middle of the fifth century. Toramana was followed by his son Mihirakula (502-530 CE). Inscriptions belonging to Mihirakula's and his father's reigns have been found as far south as Sagar (Madhya Pradesh state). There is also a sizable collection of coins that attest to the time period of their reign. Mihirakula proceeded to invade eastern kingdoms but was first defeated by Yashodharman of Malwa. He was subsequently defeated and captured by the Gupta king Narasimhagupta

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Baladitya. The Magadha king tried him and declared the right punishment for Mihirakula to be execution. However, Baladitya's mother intervened and argued against capital punishment. Mihirakula's life was thus spared. Meanwhile, during Mihirakula's stay in prison, his associate had already completed a coup and taken power in Shakala (present-day Sialkot, Pakistan). Mihirakula then fled to Kashmir, where he was warmly received, but later he fomented a rebellion and killed the king, assuming power himself. He then annexed Gandhara after a surprise assassination of its king and the slaughter of all his ministers. He looted the country and carried the spoils to his capital.

Kalhana calls Mihirakula a cruel being, "a man of violent acts and resembling '*kaala*' (death)". His presence and that of his army were known by the assemblage of crows and vultures that feasted on the dead. It is said that when he saw his queen wearing a jacket made of cloth from Sri Lanka with the Sinhala king's footprints, he went all the way to that country to attack and kill its ruler. Mihirakula was also known to never express joy or laugh. On his way back from Sri Lanka, he heard the terrified cry of an elephant falling from a precipice near Tral. He felt much joy and excitement and ordered that an elephant be thrown like that each morning so that he could have a good laugh.

Another story of his cruelty relates to a rock that he found difficult to move from its place and thus impeded the work of diverting a river. When he performed penance for its removal, he came to know that a *Yaksha*, who observed the vow of chastity, lived in that rock, and would stop obstructing the king's work only if it was touched by a chaste woman. Because most of the women failed the chastity test and only Chandravati, the wife of a potter, passed it, the king was so enraged that he slaughtered all the women and their families in that area.

Mihirakula originally desired to study Buddhism and commanded that a learned and virtuous monk be recommended to him. The monks of those days were humble and did not aspire to high honors, so none came forward in response to the king's request. Eventually, his ministers found a man of

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outstanding virtue who had served as a servant in the king's household before becoming a monk. On learning that the monk sent to instruct him had formerly been his servant, the king lost his reverence for Buddhism and instead turned against it, banishing the Buddhist monks from the kingdom. He destroyed Buddhist temples and stupas. For his acts, Mihirakula is recorded in the Buddhist tradition as having been uncouth and extremely cruel. He then became a patron of Shaivism. Kalhana records that Mihirakula atoned for all the cruel things he had done by observing penance, giving a thousand *agraharas* to Brahmins, and immolating himself "on an iron board which was studded with sharp objects".

To the relief of terror-stricken citizens, Mihirakula's son Baka restored peace in their lives. He further revived Hinduism and built temples in honor of Shiva, but he met a sad end because of witchcraft. After his death, Mihirakula's younger brother Pravarsena I came to Kashmir and ascended the Kashmir throne around the end of the 6th century CE. He built the present Srinagar city and called it Pravarpura. He also installed *Sri Chakra* at *Chakrishwar* (Hari Parbat). He built the first-ever bridge on Vitasta (Jhelum) near present-day Maisuma. Thousands of Buddhist monasteries were burnt and the villages that supported these were given to Brahmins.

Pravarsena was followed by Kshitinanda, Vasunanda and Nara II. Gopaditya became the king around the early part of the 7th century CE. He is known for establishing a shrine on the Gopa-hill (now called the Shankaracharya Hill) and bestowing *Agraharas* on Brahmins in that area (present-day Gupkar). Some other less-known kings, like Gokarna, Narendraditya I and Yudhisthira I, followed the reign of Gopaditya.

Yudhisthira I started his rule by taking good care of his people but could not keep it up for long. After some time, the lure of power destroyed his sense of discrimination, for he ceased to differentiate between the deserving and useless beings. Because of this, he lost the respect of his public and the wise beings of the land. The kingdom, too, suffered because of his waywardness. His selfish

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friends took advantage of this situation and openly challenged his authority. Even when he offered to resolve his differences with them, they refused to come forward, for they feared that after regaining power, he could pose a threat to their very existence. So, they attacked his palace but allowed him to flee. The public looted the palace and took away his treasures and even some women. His wives, though, managed to slip away with him but were overtaken by sadness and fatigue. After seeking refuge in the plains, he attempted to regain his throne but failed. He was caught and imprisoned by his ministers in a place called Duarganjan (present-day Drugjan in Srinagar).

Yudhisthira's ministers invited Pratapaditya I to be their king. With that, the Gonandiya dynasty came to an end and the family of Pratapaditya took control of the kingdom. Pratapaditya was succeeded by Jalaukasa and then by his son Tunjina, whose queen Vakpusta was a saintly woman and said to possess divine powers. The king and his queen built several temples and founded new towns. They also patronized learned men and scholars and promoted fine arts. Kalhana presents a detailed picture of the famine that devastated the land during this time and how it tested Tunjina and his wife. The famine was caused by an unseasonable snowfall that led to the failure of crops, and hordes of people started to die of hunger. Its impact on humans was so severe that people lost their love and affection for their near and dear ones and turned extremely selfish in their ways, but Tunjina responded to the crisis with grace and determination. He was so moved by the helplessness of his people that he used his treasures and the wealth of his ministers to buy food for them. When that got exhausted and the misery of the people did not look like ending, he resolved to immolate himself to appease the gods. His wise queen told him to be brave and not even think of this because that would only add to the problems of his subjects. Eventually, when Tunjina died, his wife performed *sati* after him. They did not have any heirs. He was succeeded by Vijaya and Jayendra. Kalhana narrates an interesting story: Astrologers had predicted that one of Jayendra's ministers, Sandhimati, would take over as the king. Jayendra put Sandhimati in prison and when he was about to be executed, he was saved miraculously by his guru Isana. Jayendra was killed by one of his stepsisters,

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who in turn was killed by Dilhara, another stepsister who also happened to be his bodyguard. Since people were so impressed by the virtual rebirth of Sandhimati, they urged his guru to persuade him to accept the kingship, which he did. As a king, he devoted all his time to the worship of Shiva and installed *lingas* at many places in his kingdom. However, he was proven to be unfit as a ruler.

By this time, it had become known that Meghavahana, son of Gopaditya, was living in exile in Gandhara. He gladly accepted the people's invitation to be their king. It is quite understandable that in Gandhara, he would have been influenced by Buddhism. Much of that is reflected in his actions and thinking and in the many interesting stories that are associated with him, which survived even till the times of Kalhana. As a kind and merciful king, Meghavahana banned the killing of all forms of living creatures, not only in his kingdom but also in other countries over which he had gained political or military control.

Kalhana has recorded several incidents from his life to show how kindness and non-violence formed the essential core of his royal life, and how he fought superstitious practices that legitimized the killing of humans and animals. When a group of women told him to release the Nagas who had been chained only because, as floating clouds, they had posed a threat to the crops of farmers, he showed mercy towards them.

On another occasion, Meghavahana heard the cry of a person who was about to be sacrificed by another person because he had been told that by offering a human sacrifice to the deity, his dying son could be saved. He told the father of the dying child to spare the life of the man he had decided to kill, for he would offer his own body to the goddess. When the arm that rose to kill him was held by a divine hand, and his head was covered with divine flowers, the divine being Varuna told the king that all that had happened was meant to test his nobility. Meghavahana had to face a similar situation when a Brahmin told him that he was being prevented from sacrificing an animal to please Durga for saving his son and even argued with him that a Brahmin's life was more

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valuable than that of an animal. The king heard him patiently and told him that he would offer his own body to Durga the day after. But that did not happen because Brahmin's son recovered during the night. Because of his saintly ways, he gradually lost interest in ruling the kingdom and gave up his throne to become a hermit. He spent his last days in Shiva-Bhuteshvara (at Naran Nag). His principal queen founded a monastery for Buddhist pilgrims. His other queens, too, provided for several stupas and *viharas*, which existed for many years after their death. Meghavahan's rule was followed by that of his son Sresthasena also known as Pravarasena II. Pravarsena II, who had been brought up in a potter's family, displayed many signs of his royal lineage.

Around this time, much of northern India was ruled by Harshvardhan (606-647 CE), with his capital in Kannauj (north central UP). According to D. C. Sircar, Kalhana could have confused the legendary Vikramaditya with Vardhana or Emperor Harshvardhan. The latter was well-connected with Kashmir. The courtiers of the deceased king requested Harshvardhan to take control of the kingdom and send somebody to run the state. It so happened that at that time, a poor Brahmin from Kashmir and a poet of great standing by the name of Matrigupta was a member of his court. He had served the king with great devotion for several months in the hope of a suitable reward for his efforts. The king, too, was conscious of his hard work and merit but had found it extremely difficult to reward him adequately. One day, almost in the middle of the night, when he got the opportunity of hearing Matrigupta's superbly made poetic utterance in response to one of his queries, he got a clear hint of rewarding him with the vacant throne of Kashmir. Matrigupta ruled righteously and voluntarily relinquished the throne and went to Varanasi when he heard that his mentor Harshvardhan had passed away.

When Pravarasena II heard that the king had left Kashmir, he went to see him. He was deeply moved by his piety and selfless devotion when he told him that because his master had passed away, there was nothing left in his life. Praversena II implored him to take back his throne, but he refused. When he

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took over the kingship, he sent part of the revenue of the state to Matrigupta, who gave it away to the needy.

Pravarasena II made several conquests and helped Harshvardhan's son to reclaim the throne that had forcibly been taken from him by an enemy of his. Pravarasena II's son, Yudhishthira II, ruled over a domain stretching from Kashmir to Kabul. He and his ministers built many *viharas* and *chaityas*. He was followed by two kings, but the one who came after them, Ranaditya, is quite well-known because of his unusual experience with a woman. It is said that in his previous birth, he was a gambler who, after losing everything that he had, decided to see the goddess Bramaravasini, for which he had to face a complicated obstacle course. When he succeeded in completing it, the goddess encouraged him to ask for a boon. He instantly asked for a sexual union with her and stuck to what he had asked. The woman told him that he could have her only in his next birth. So, he instantly sacrificed his body. When the gambler was reborn as Ranaditya, the goddess appeared in the shape of a small girl and grew into a beautiful woman named Ranarambha and married Ranaditya. Together they consecrated many Shiva and Vishnu temples in Srinagar.

Ranaditya was succeeded by Vikramaditya (not to confuse with the king of Ujjain) and then by his brother Baladitya (561-598 CE), who marked the end of the revived Gonandiya dynasty. During the period starting with Meghavhana, Buddhism was completely overwhelmed by the re-emergence of traditional Nilmata-Shiva-Shakti cults.

Many historians are of the view that with the coming to the throne of the Karkota dynasty, Kalhana's chronicle gains in reliability because from this time, that is, from the middle of the seventh century to the time in which he lived, i.e., roughly the middle of the twelfth century, the account is detailed and accurate, as has been corroborated by historical evidence from other sources, which include the accounts of foreign travelers and the coins related to the time.

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Durlabhavardana (598-634 CE) founded the Karkota dynasty, which gave seventeen rulers to Kashmir, whose reign lasted till the middle of the ninth century. Durlabhavardana's ascending the throne is linked with an interesting story about him, in which Baladitya figures prominently. Baladitya's wife bore him a beautiful daughter, who was named Ananglekha. On seeing her, an astrologer told him that with her marriage, his dynasty would come to an end and her husband would start a new one. Because he did not like this, he decided right then that he would not give her in marriage to a person with a royal connection. Baladitya would see Durlabhavardana every day, for the latter oversaw his stables. Since he considered him a low-born, he thought that Durlabhavardana was the right person to be his son-in-law. He did not know that he was the son of a king. He could not live the life of a prince because his father had not married his mother according to social customs. Ananglekha did not respect her husband at all. Sitting by the side of the king, Durlabhavardana was noticed by his courtiers for his courteous behavior and intelligence. The king, too, was impressed by his ability and named him Prajhaditya.

Because of her pampered ways, Ananglekha not only spurned her husband but also became friendly with Khankha, a minister in her father's court. Durlabhavardana noticed her open preference for the minister and learnt from his servants that she often admitted him to her private chamber, but he did not speak about this to anybody, not even to her father. One day, when he chanced to enter her chamber, he found her asleep by the side of the minister. The glow on her face confirmed that the two had slept after indulging in sex. He became angry and felt like hitting her, but stopped himself from doing that because he realized that anger does not promote good. He reflected a great deal on the character of women and human passions and felt that he was being overpowered by jealousy, which was not right. He felt that there was no better way to punish the two than to make them realize that he had proof of their immoral conduct, for which they deserved punishment. So, he wrote on the border of Khankha's dress: "Remember that you have not been slain, though deserving of death". When the minister read that, he called off his relationship with Ananglekha and started thinking about how he could repay

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Durlabhavardana for sparing his life. He sensed his opportunity when Baladitya passed away without providing an heir to the throne. He worked hard to get Durlabhavardana the kingship he richly deserved by removing all the obstacles in his way and silencing the dissenting voices. Durlabhavardana became the king and laid the foundation of the Karkota dynasty. His rule lasted for thirty-six years and was marked by his devotion to Shiva, in whose honor he built several temples. His wife, whose lapse into immorality had been hidden by him from others, also built a *vihara*.

Durlabhavardana's son Durlabhaka assumed a new name, Pratapaditya, after his maternal grandfather and built the town of Pratapura. At one time, he became friendly with a merchant called Nona. He invited him to his palace and treated him like a royal being. On his return visit to the merchant's home, he was smitten by his beautiful wife, Narendraprabha, but instantly realized that as a king, he could not afford to show such passion towards the wife of a subject and violate the very laws that he was supposed to honor. Despite being acutely conscious of the need to observe the right conduct, he could not help longing for her, which made him so ill that it looked like he was dying. When the merchant heard about the cause of the king's illness from some people, he went to see him and virtually offered his wife to him. He also told him that if he considered his offer improper, then he would use the expedient of giving away his wife as a dancing girl to some temple, wherefrom he could take her to his palace. After hearing the merchant, the king felt ashamed but reluctantly accepted his offer.

Narendraprabha married the king and bore him three sons: Chandrapida, Tarapida, and Muktapida, who were also known as Vajraditya, Udyaditya, and Lalitaditya. After his death, the throne passed on to his eldest son Chandrapida.

The Chinese records confirm that Chandrapida had embassy-level contacts with the Chinese Emperor. He even asked him for help against the Arabs, who were trying to make inroads from the northernmost part of his kingdom.

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Chandrapida was brave, wise and just and performed many praiseworthy acts. Kalhana provides two examples of his commitment to justice. The first one is related to the making of the temple of Tribhuvanasvamin. When his workers started its construction on a chosen site, it necessitated the removal of a hut that belonged to a leather tanner, who refused to part with it. When they reported the matter to the king, he told them to stop construction and change the location of the temple, for it was not desirable to resort to unlawful ways, even for a good cause. Right then, a messenger who had been sent to the leather tanner reported to the king that the tanner wanted his permission to see him, which was readily granted. He told the king that his hut was as precious to him as the palace was to the king, so he should not use force to take control of the houses of his subjects. However, he would be willing to part with his hut if the king asked for it with due propriety. The king promptly went to his home, requested him to give his hut to him and paid him money for it. And that is how work on the construction of the temple was resumed.

Another example is about a Brahmin woman who was on a fast unto death because her husband had been murdered in his sleep, although he was a good man and had no enemies. She suspected that the deed had been done by a Brahmin who was inferior to him in learning and knew witchcraft. The king summoned the Brahmin for interrogation but could not find anything to hold him guilty. When he reported his experience with him to the woman, she refused to accept it and continued with her fast. She also told him that she chose not to die with her husband only because she wanted the murderer punished. The king was left with no choice but to plead with his god. After three days, he heard god speak to him in his dream that he should make the Brahmin circumambulate a known shrine three times at night, and if his footprints were followed by the footprints of a female specter, then he was the murderer. The king did that and the Brahmin was proven a murderer and punished for his action, but not with death because Brahmins could not be sentenced to death. The woman thanked him for his efforts in pursuit of justice.

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Chandrapida's brother Tarapida exploited the anger of the punished Brahmin for his selfish motive by encouraging him to use his witchcraft to destroy him. The king, even at the point of death, did not act against the Brahmin, because he knew that he had been instigated to do the evil deed by his brother.

Tarapidas's short span of over four years as a king is marked by his wicked ways, creating terror among his populace and spilling their blood. Since he thought that the Brahmins had the power to make the gods interfere in the human world, he hated the gods and punished the Brahmins. They, in turn, used the same witchcraft against him that they had used against his brother, and that is how he perished, to make way for his younger brother Muktapida (Lalitaditya), who is famous for his valor, military prowess and love of architecture.

Part B

Facts related to the life of Gautama Buddha, after whom Buddhism came into being, are quite well known, though there are different versions of the time he lived in this world. According to one version, generally called the Sri Lankan Version, he is believed to have lived from 466 to 386 BCE, but in another version, which has gained more acceptability than the first one, the years are 563 to 483 BCE.

Though born into a rich, royal family, Buddha consciously chose the path of seeking salvation at a young age because he was deeply touched by the severity of human suffering. During his spiritual journey, he also assessed what people generally did to seek salvation—observing elaborate rituals connected with Vedic Hinduism or the austerities associated with asceticism. Though he found them unsatisfactory, he accepted the theories of karma and rebirth associated with Hinduism. Because of this, it would not be right to say that the religion he founded is an outright revolt against the existing religion(s) of his times.

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Buddha's main concern was to evolve a path of true morality, which could pave the way for Enlightenment. For this, he created a simple religion with no rituals and priests, which was open to all, irrespective of their caste, creed, color, or any other discriminations. He created the wheel of *Dhamma*, of righteousness, and encouraged people to organize themselves into *sanghas* or brotherhoods.

Because Buddha delivered his early sermons near Magadh, his early followers came from areas around that place and then spread to other places. Since Kashmir had a strong connection with Magadh, Buddhist monks moved into Kashmir soon after Buddha's followers grew in numbers. They stayed on to attract people to Buddhism, but its growing influence got mixed up with the rulers of the place. Because of this, Buddhism had its peaks and lows in Kashmir, and after nearly nine centuries of its coexistence with other forms of Hinduism, it suffered a steady decline.

The Archaeological Survey of India carried out several excavations in the state of Jammu and Kashmir towards the end of the 20th century. The most successful were excavations carried out at the hamlet called Pamvarawan at Ambaran in Akhnoor, about 28 km northwest of Jammu on the right bank of river Chenab. There, the discovery of a tooth and other relics believed to be that of Buddha made the archaeologists and historians focus their attention much deeper on the existence of Buddhism and Buddhist culture in Kashmir Valley.

The Mauryan emperor Ashoka (273-232 BCE) had an overall important role in the propagation of Buddhism. Hirakawa Akira has stated that Ashoka converted to Buddhism when he had been a king for nearly seven years, "but he was not particularly pious". When he fought the war of Kalinga in the eighth year of his reign, his life took a dramatic turn. Although he won the war, he was so moved by the destruction caused by it that he decided to put a stop to the violence of every kind. Because of this, the peaceful ways of the Buddhists became the most important part of his life.

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According to northern traditions, Ananda's last disciple, Madhyantika, went to Kashmir approximately a hundred years after the Buddha's death or around 380 BCE. There he built a place to meditate and live. He converted some Nagas to Buddhism as well as spread it among the people. He also taught the people how to grow tulips. According to the Sri Lankan tradition, missionaries from the Buddhist order were sent by Ashoka to spread the ideals of Buddhism to nine different countries around 265 BCE. According to Akira, as part of this exercise, Madhyantika (also known as Majjhantika) took five monks with him to Kashmir and "converted evil dragons there by using his superhuman powers and by teaching people the *Asivisopama-Sutta*".

This is a significant observation and points to some interesting features of the history of Buddhism in India. Firstly, it is understood within two traditions: the Sri Lankan and the North Indian, in which even the names of principal characters are known differently. Secondly, in the statement that Majjhantika converted both dragons and human beings, there is an implicit suggestion that the two belong to two different orders. The dragons perhaps refer to Nagas, supposed to be the earliest inhabitants of Kashmir, who could be controlled and converted only by using superhuman powers.

Despite his newfound faith in Buddhism, Ashoka showed great respect for Hinduism. He patronized the Buddhist monks as well as the priests of other religions. This is borne by two of the several rock edicts that he installed in his kingdom. Rock Edict VII "wished members of all religions to live everywhere in his kingdom". Rock Edict XII states that "he gave *dhana* (alms) and honored (respected) both members of religious orders and the laity of all religious groups". Further, there were "Ministers of Dharma to be responsible for affairs related to the Buddhist order". Other ministers of Dharma were responsible for the affairs of Brahmins, *Ajivikas* and Jains. The result was that these religions co-existed peacefully. Images of Buddha from Ashoka's times have been found in various localities of Srinagar.

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Ashoka organized an important meeting of the Buddhists in Patliputra to which monks from Kashmir were also invited to work out reconciliation among the different sects that had grown around Buddhism, the main ones being the Theravadins and the Sarvastivadins. The reasons for the growth of sects within the Sangha have been explained differently. Some believe that it was because Buddha gave his followers unbelievable freedom to follow his way only if they felt convinced that it was the right one for them. Because of this, differences of opinion among the members of the Sangha existed even during Buddha's time. Some explain these in terms of the special nature of the locations where it spread.

Some historians believe that the decision to send Majjhantika to Kashmir was taken in that Council. According to Hiuen-Tsang, five hundred monks shifted to Kashmir during Ashoka's reign. At first, the Nagas did not take kindly to the propagation of the new religion by Majjhantika, but because he impressed them by his discourses and extraordinary powers, they accepted him and his ways.

Before the Kushans, Kashmir was ruled by the Greek Meanander (175-150 BCE), whose relationship with Buddhism has been looked at differently by scholars. According to one version of the Pali sources, he is called Milinda and figures in the work, *Milindapanha*, as a happy devout Buddhist who, at one point in his life, handed over his kingdom to his son and became a Buddhist monk. But some scholars, whose views have been documented by K. L. Hazra, have disputed this claim, especially because some of his coins carry the image of Athena, a known Greek deity. But because the image of the wheel, an important Buddhist symbol, also figures in some of them, more scholars are inclined to believe that he indeed had converted to Buddhism.

The glorious period of Buddhism in Kashmir was witnessed during the time of Kushans, especially during the time of Kanishka, about whose conversion to the faith there are two stories. One is that he was converted by Asvagosha, who

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himself had converted to the faith after suffering a defeat in debates with Buddhists.

Hieun-Tsang's version is a little more colorful and has a supernatural air to it. One day, during a hunt, when Kanishka suddenly lost sight of the white hare he had been pursuing, he decided to go in its search. That led to his encounter with a boy who was trying to erect a stupa. When the king asked him what he was up to, he told him of a prophecy made by Buddha that four hundred years after his death, a king would erect a stupa at that place and that he was the one who would do it. Kanishka was pleased to hear that; he became a Buddhist and erected a stupa at that very place, which existed there right up to the coming of the Muslims into the Valley.

Almost like this, but slightly different, is the version in Fa-Hsein, for in this, Buddha himself speaks about it to his devotee Ananda:

> When Buddha was travelling in this country [Purushapura or Peshawar], he said to Ananda, "After my *pari-nirvana*, there will be a king named Kanishka, who shall on this spot build a *tope*". This Kanishka was afterwards born into the world, and (once) when he had gone forth to look about him, Sarka, ruler of Devas, wishing to excite the idea in his mind, assumed the appearance of a herd-boy and was making a tope right in the way of the king, who asked what sort of a thing he was making. The boy said, 'I am making a *tope* for Buddha'. The king said, 'Very good', and immediately right over the *tope* of a herd-boy, he (proceeded to) build another one, which was more than four hundred cubits high and adorned with layers of all the precious substances (33-34).

It is quite clear that in both versions, Kanishka was destined to become a Buddhist. After he became one, he took to the study of Buddhist scriptures with the help of monks. When he found that they held different views about the tenants of the faith, he got confused and sought clarification on this from Parsva, a known priest of his time. Parsva told him that the varied views reflected the differences among the sects that had grown around Buddhism. In

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the main sect, there were two groups, orthodox and unorthodox: *Sthaviravadins* and *Mahasanghikas.* But there were significant sub-sects in them, eleven in the first one and seven in the second one, and each of them had a distinct name as well.

Akira has provided another explanation for the growth of such differences even though they had been resolved during Ashoka's time. He writes that "The spread of Buddhism to all of India meant that regional differences were added to doctrinal differences with the result that schisms occurred rapidly during the century after Ashoka's death".

So Kanishka, like Ashoka, was resolved to try to evolve a consensus among these sects, for which he invited many priests to his place. After treating them well for seven days, four hundred and ninety-nine of them were selected to rearrange the scriptures and write a commentary on them.

Kanishka gave them several options about the place where they could stay to do the job. After discussing the feasibility of the given options, they decided to have the meeting in Kashmir because of its pleasant climate. Kanishka brought them to the chosen location, where they stayed for six months. The monks who participated and formed part of what came to be known as the Fourth Council included almost an equal number of arhats, bodhisattvas, and pandits. According to Taranath, five hundred from each group made up the Council. Vasumitra was the president of the Council and Asvaghosa was its vice president

The assemblage examined all the available sayings and teachings of the Buddha: *Sutra* or sermon, *Vinaya* or discipline and *Abhidharma* or metaphysics. The commentaries of the original texts were called *Upadesasastras* and the interpretative works on them were called *Vibhashastras.* According to Hazra, a galaxy of scholars attended the council that included Parsva, Vasumitra, Asvaghosa, Sangharaksa, Dharmatrata, Ghosaka and Buddhadeva. He further adds, "During the session of the council, 100,000 stanzas of each of

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the *Upadesasastras* explanatory of the canonical sutras, Vinaya-vibhasasastras explanatory of the Vinaya, and Abhidharma-vibhasasastras explanatory of the Abhidharma were composed during the sessions of the council". It is believed that the king had these engraved on copper plates and put in stone receptacles over which stupas were built. The Vibhashas carry a deep imprint of the Kashmiri Sanskrit tradition. Because of this development, Kashmir became a known center of Buddhist learning, and many learned men made it their home.

The Council changed the very face of Buddhism. Because its members used Sanskrit as the language of discussion and thought, Buddhism became known as Sanskrit Buddhism. The Brahmin converts, who had a language proficiency, became influential in shaping its new identity. Buddhists developed a sacred pantheon of their own. Buddha was made into a God, and other gods like Avlokitesvara and Manjushri personified the great virtues of compassion and wisdom. The faith also witnessed the creation of Boddhisattva, a person who, even after attaining enlightenment, postpones his deliverance to help others attain the same. The way Buddhahood could be attained through discipline and piety also underwent some subtle changes. The older and more rigid Hinayana form of the faith changed to Mahayana, i.e., from the little vehicle to the great vehicle. It provided the flexibility that was missing in the earlier version; under the new dispensation, there was no immediate need to renounce the world.

Since Buddha had already emerged as a god, his relics in the stupas made them centers of pilgrimage. Images of Buddha were cast in metal and stone, and scenes from his life adorned the newly-created chaityas. This expanded its reach and contributed to its popularity, for it could satisfy the yearnings of people who had converted from Hinduism. Kashmir became a center for the exchange of ideas. Monks came to stay here, and many left the place to propagate the religion in other parts of the world.

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The most impactful outcome of the Council was that many learned people helped in spreading Buddhism in other parts of the world, where it flourished to stay as one of the main religions. One of the major beneficiaries of this new spirit was China, and this has been recorded in several Chinese texts. Many of these scholars took great risks in reaching far-flung places in the country.

One of the important figures in this missionary program is Kumarjiva who received his education in Kashmir and made several influential connections with other people. A well-known story about his birth and upbringing is that when he was just nine years old, his mother took him to Kashmir, where he became a student of Bandhudatta, and while coming back from there to his home in Kucha (Aksu, China) he was joined by several Kashmiris. According to Bamzai, "At Kucha, he established a monastery and undertook the translation of Sanskrit Buddhist texts and in collaboration with his Kashmiri followers explained these to the Central Asian and Chinese audiences which flocked to his sermons".

When one of the Chinese generals who conquered Kucha eventually became the emperor of southern Liang, he took Kumarjiva with him to his place, where he became the greatest exponent of what came to be known as Chinese Buddhism. At the request of the Chinese Emperor, he went to his capital in 401 CE and stayed on till his death in 413 CE. During the time he stayed there, he encouraged translations of some known texts.

Bamzai has a long section in his book on scholars who spread Buddhism in other parts of China. They include Sanghabuti, who helped translate texts from Sanskrit to Chinese. Gautamasangha wrote several books on Abhidharma. Punyatrata and his pupil Dharmayasa spread Buddhism in several parts of Asia and then finally went to China. Budhayasas and Vimalksha, Buddhavarman, and Ratnacinta are the other known scholars who played a great part in spreading Buddhism in various parts of China.

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Several scholars went to Tibet too. One of the greatest was Shyama Bhatta, who enjoyed so much respect for his work that he was given the Tibetan name of Thumi Sambhota and worshipped as an incarnation of Manjushri.

During the time of the three rulers—Hushka, Jushka, and Kanishka, one of the greatest Buddhist philosophers, Nagarjuna, lived near the present-day Harwan, which some claim to be the place where the Fourth Council was held, though some say that it could have been held at Kanispora. The presence of Nagarjuna strengthened the roots of Buddhism in Kashmir because, under his guidance, the Buddhists defeated the Brahmins of the land. However, many monks died because of the ravages of nature that took the form of snowstorms. As stated earlier, some Brahmins, including Chandradeva, called the storms the work of the Naga gods.

The severity of the storms compelled the king to observe austerities to please the Nilanag, the main deity of the Valley. It is also believed that hostile weather, which led to the death of many monks, compelled many of them to move out of Kashmir. Because of this, Buddhism went into decline. This continued during the time of the next three rulers. And then, during the times of Nara or Kinnara, the Buddhists suffered another disaster when one of the monks carried away the king's wife. In a retaliatory move, the king destroyed their dwellings, and the lands attached to them for their upkeep were given to Brahmins. Since the king tried to seduce the wife of a pious Brahmin, the rage of the father of the wife consumed the king and his kingdom.

Things continued like that when the last king of the dynasty, Yudhishthira, was deposed by his ministers, and an outsider Pratapaditya came to Kashmir. He was followed by Jalaukasa and Tunjina, both were Shaivites, but the tradition of the harmonious coexistence of all faiths continued during their time. Since Buddhism had changed considerably to attract people's attention, it continued to flourish even without royal patronage.

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During the reign of Durlabhvardana, Hiuen-Tsang came to Kashmir from China and stayed on for two years. He has written that Buddha was honored by the people of Kashmir and more than five thousand monks lived in about one hundred dwellings spread all over the kingdom. The rulers and their wives, too, showed keen interest in the faith. Durlabhvardana's wife raised a *vihara* for the monks and Chandrapida's wife too patronized the faith. Lalitaditya's chief minister, Chankune, though not a Buddhist, built a *vihara*. The ruins of Parihaspura and Hushkapura, two known cities of Lalitaditya's time, confirm that Buddhism had a marked presence during his time, for ruins of massive images of Buddha have been found near these sites.

During the time of the Karkota kings, Buddhism started coming nearer to Hinduism because Buddhists added many of its goddesses to their pantheon of gods. Asvaghosha composed hymns in praise of Buddha and Sarvajanamitra gave up everything he had, became a bhikshu, and wrote devotional poems. An interesting story about him is that when a Brahmin asked him for money, and he had nothing on him, he sold himself to a king who was collecting one hundred people for offering human sacrifice. Just before he had to be killed, he sang a hymn to Tara, who descended to rescue him and all those who were to die along with him.

Buddhism also came nearer to Shaivism through tantrism, which spread to China, Tibet, Mongolia, Korea and Japan. Kashmiri monks went into these lands. Amoghavajra spread tantrism in China and his guru Vajrabodhi too joined him there. Pajnabala spread Buddhism in Tibet.

Till the end of the Karkota dynasty, Buddhism flourished along with Shaivism, which registered a new high during the times of Avantivarman, in whose times temples were also built for Shiva and Vishnu. During the time of Shankarvarman, Shaivism and Buddhism came so close to each other that there was not much difference between the two. Buddha had been accepted as an incarnation of Vishnu. Brahmin priests and Buddhist monks knew both religions. The great stalwarts of Shaivism, like Abhinavgupta, Khemraja, and

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others, provided a new strength to Shaivism and the distinct identity of Buddhism faded with time.

The supremacy of the Shaivite philosophers has led to an interesting story of their debate with the Buddhists in which the latter suffered a defeat, and soon after that, there was a steady decline in their cultural influence. Khemraja, the disciple of Abhinavgupta, is believed to have said that when Vasugupta invoked the help of Shiva for taking part in a debate with the Buddhists, Shiva visited him in his dream, told him to go to the foot of the Mahadeva Mountain and read *Siva-Sutras* engraved on a rock. He promptly followed the advice and defeated the Buddhists.

In his work on the rise and decline of Buddhism in India, K. T. S. Sarao has stated that its near disappearance in Kashmir and in other parts of India is one of the "most puzzling conundrums" in Indian history, but it was "neither uniform in terms of time nor was it consistent in the manner of its decline." Regarding its slow decline in Kashmir, he states that one of its main reasons was the "cultural ascendancy" of the Hindu ideal which started gaining strength after the Kushans, but small traces of Buddhism were visible during the times of later rulers. Buddhist *viharas* existed along with Vaishnava temples during the times of Queen Didda. Harsha destroyed images of all religions, including those of Buddha. Jayasimha is known to have provided for Buddhist *viharas,* which confirms that the Buddhists had a small presence till the end of the twelfth century. Marco Polo has mentioned in his travels that he could see only small pockets of Buddhists and some Muslim converts in an overwhelmingly Hindu society.

Stray references to Buddhist priests figure till the times of early Muslim rulers like Zain-ul-Abidin. Sarao mentions that when Abu'l Fazal visited Kashmir with Akbar, he met "some old men who professed their faith in Buddhism, though he could not find any Buddhist scholar".

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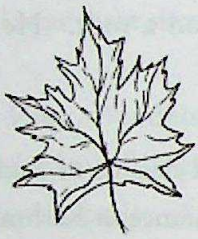
In his acute analysis of the decline of Buddhism, Sarao says that the main reason for this was the growth of marked affinity between Hinduism and Buddhism. Both emphasized the importance of the individual effort to seek salvation, and both held that the nature of reality was unknowable. The growth of Tantrism virtually fused the two into one. Interestingly, he also mentions that holding on to Buddhism was not congenial for wielding power. That is why Rinchana sought to convert to a non-Buddhist religion.



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Chapter 3

THE HINDU RULERS

Tej N Dhar

Lalitaditya Muktapida was the most prominent king of the Karkota dynasty who ruled for 37 years (724-761 CE). His rule is considered a golden age in Kashmir, where art, architecture and learning flourished. According to R. C. Majumdar, Lalitaditya first faced Yashovarman, the successor of the famous ruler of the Pushyabhuti dynasty, Harshvardhan. Lalitaditya proceeded to the east, reaching Kalinga (modern-day Odisha) and Gauda (Bengal). After that, he set out towards the Vindhyas, where he met the queen, Ratta or Bhavangana of the Rashtrakut dynasty. She had constructed roads over the Vindhya mountains and was as powerful as Goddess Vindyabasini (*Maa Durga*). But a powerful ruler like her, too, bowed to Lalitaditya. From then on, Lalitaditya marched on triumphant from the seven Konkans to Dwarka to Avanti, all the way into Punjab.

Following his victories in the South, Lalitaditya focused on the north and attacked Ladakh as well as other western provinces, which were under the rule of the Tibetans and liberated them. He was successful in making the Tang dynasty of China his ally in his fight against the Arabs and Tibetans and recruited Chinese mercenaries and strategists in his army and succeeded in defeating the Tibetans. Alberuni, in his treatise *Tarikh-i-Hind* mentions that the Kashmiris celebrated the second of Chaitra as his victory over the Tibetans.

Soon after, Junaid, the Arab governor of Sind, attacked Kashmir on the orders of caliph Hisham. The Arabs, with Muhammad Bin Qasim, had established their rule over Sindh and the region was thoroughly plundered. After that,

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Junaid set his eyes on Kashmir, but Lalitaditya defeated him so badly that he dared not attack Kashmir till he was alive. The impact of this victory delayed further Islamic misadventures by almost 300 years.

Lalitaditya went on to defeat the invading Turusharkas (the Turks of Turkmenistan and Tochran from Badakhshan), Bhauttas (from Baltistan and Tibet) and Dardas. He also won over Central Asia, which comprises modern-day countries like Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, south Kyrgyzstan and southwest Kazakhstan. After that, he invaded Turkistan through Kabul and defeated Momin of Bukhara four times and killed him the fifth time. His forces reached the Aranyaka kingdom (Persia), now known as Iran. The most remarkable feature of his conquests was that, as a Hindu king, he never destroyed the culture of the lands he conquered.

Lalitaditya was not only a great warrior but also a benevolent ruler and a great patron of science, arts and architecture who left behind the memory of his reign through marvelous works of architecture. Kashmir has always been a great seat of learning, and Lalitaditya further promoted research in arts, science and Hindu architecture. When he defeated Yashovarman, he brought two great writers, Bhavabhuti and Vakpatiya, to his kingdom. His love and respect for learned people is described by Kalhana thus: "He collected from [different] countries various wise men, as the wind [collects] masses of full-blown flowers from the trees". He built great temples, the most significant being the Martand Sun Temple which was destroyed during the reign of Sultan Sikander. He built many schools and learning centers in Kashmir. He established several towns, including a new capital at Parihaspur (city of pleasure) near Manasbal, although he also maintained the traditional capital at Srinagar.

The era of his kingship was one of prosperity and religious tolerance, for he was respectful both to Buddhism and Hinduism. Because of this, he built temples for Buddha as well as for gods like Shiva and Vishnu and *Viharas*, where scholars from both religions enjoyed royal patronage and made additions to scholarly knowledge.

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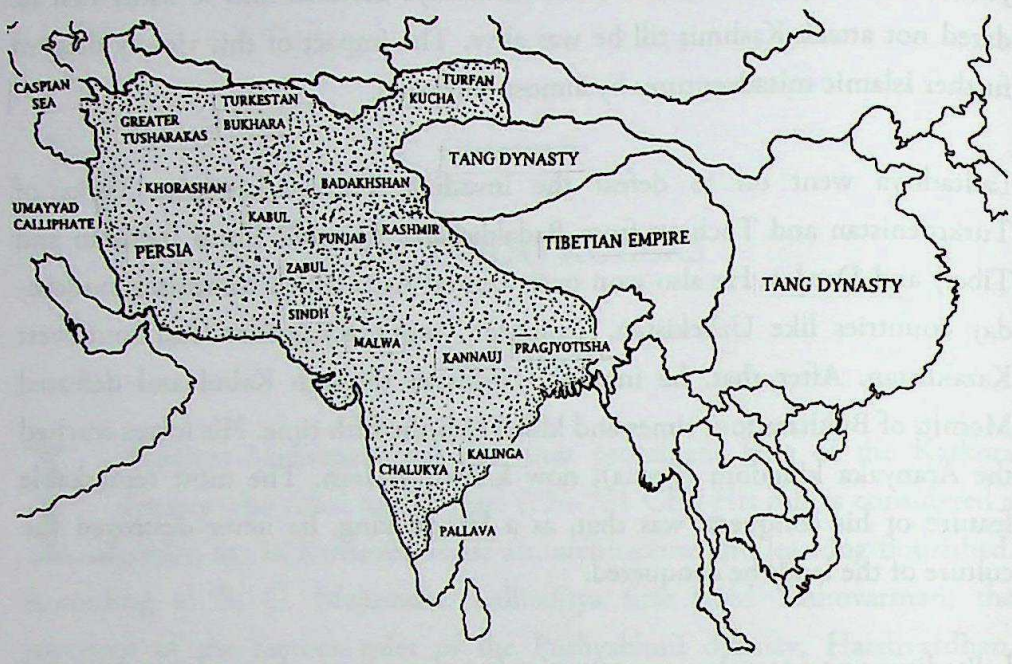

Fig 1: Karkota Empire at its peak under Lalitaditya Muktapida the Great (724-761 CE)

Lalitaditya revamped the central administrative structure of his kingdom by adding five more functionaries to the structure that was already there. The head of these five functionaries was called *Panchamahasabda*. He also protected his farmers from the fury of floods and thus anticipated the work of Suuya. He drained the water of the Mahapadma Lake (Wular Lake), creating new water-carrying channels, making arrangements for lifting water from the Vitasta by water wheels, and reclaimed swamps for cultivation. The result was a steady growth of agricultural production.

There is no certainty about Lalitaditya's death. There are two versions of his death, both dating much after his time. One thing common in both is that he died during an expedition to the North. Kalhana mentions that he "perished through a heavy snowstorm in Aranyaka (modern Iran)". According to another version, he, along with his small detachment, ended their lives by suicide in

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order to escape being captured by the enemy when they got separated from their main army column and were blocked on a difficult mountain pass somewhere in Sinkiang.

After Lalitaditya's demise, the throne passed on to his son Kuvalayapida (760-761 CE), but his brother Vajraditya acted like a parallel ruler, who encouraged his ministers to seek favors from both. So, he put curbs on his brother and the intrigues of his ministers. When one of the ministers did not honor his commands, he decided to eliminate him along with his friends but soon realized the futility of his intended action. He gave up his throne to lead a life of asceticism, which brought Vajraditya, also called Bappiyaka, to the throne (761-768 CE). He was cruel and wicked, had numerous concubines and four wives—Meghavali, Amrtaprabha, Manjarika and Mamma and four sons. He died of drug consumption. Then followed the short rule of his sons; the first one was Prithiviyapida, who ruled for four years (768-772 CE) and was dethroned by his younger brother Sangramapida, who reigned only for seven days.

Unlike his older brothers, Jayapida, also called Vinayaditya (779-813 CE) started his reign as a king who was known as a learned warrior and caring for his subjects. [There is no consistency about these years in the literature. Some authors think that Jayapida ruled from 751-782 CE, which would be in conflict with the rule of Lalitaditya, which has been authenticated as 724-761 CE]. Encouraged by his ministers to emulate his grandfather Lalitaditya, he set off on his conquests, which were fairly extensive.

Jayapida travelled on his own to Bengal. On his way back, he passed through the territory of King Jayanta, who, impressed by the valor he displayed by killing a lion with his bare hands, offered his daughter Kalyandevi in marriage to him. After winning many battles for his father-in-law, he returned to his kingdom to find that it had been taken over by his brother-in-law Jajja. In a fierce battle, Jajja was killed, and his followers fled from the scene.

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Because of his restless nature, Jayapida could not stay at home for long and left in search of new conquests. During the invasion of Nepal, Jayapida was defeated and taken prisoner by King Artundi. He was rescued by his minister Devsarman, who, in the process, lost his life. With a fresh army, Jayapida defeated the Nepalese king and returned to Kashmir.

Through his great support for education, Kashmir became firmly established as a center for learning. Jayapida built many towns, cities, forts and viharas; even his ministers built temples in honor of Shiva. He also devoted himself to learning from distinguished scholars, some of whom he brought from other kingdoms. Notable among them are Udbhata, Damodargupta, Manoratha, Sankhadanta, Cataka, and Samdhimat. In their company, the king became an accomplished poet.

Jayapida's military expeditions adversely affected his financial stability. So, he exacted money from his subjects, took away the crops of his farmers, and turned from a graceful king into a hateful tyrant. He was particularly hard on the Brahmins, some of whom were compelled to migrate to other places. They wrote satirical verses against him, and the ones at Tulamulla cursed him openly. It is believed that because of their curses, one of the poles of his royal canopy fell on his head, causing a deep wound, which resulted in his death in 813 CE. Jayapida's son, Lalitapida (813-825 CE), was given to sensual pleasures and spent the treasures of his father on whores and courtesans. He made fun of his ancestors for having wasted their lives on conquering new kingdoms and not indulging in pleasures. Though a king, he did not like wearing crowns and royal robes. He was succeeded by his brother Sangramapida II (825-832 CE), and then by his son Chipyata-Jayapida (832-835 CE) from his concubine Jayadevi. His five maternal uncles took away whatever was left of the riches of his father and destroyed him by sorcery.

Utpalaka, one of the maternal uncles of the king, got Ajitapida (813-850 CE), a relative of the royal family, crowned as the next king. The uncles used him as a pawn in their hands and spent state money to build temples in their name. At

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one point, two of them got involved in a fight in which scores of soldiers died. Ajitapida, too, was overthrown to pass the throne to Anangapida (850-853 CE), which then passed on to Utpalapida (853-855 CE). All the while, the real power was wielded by their ministers. In any case, the Karkotas, who had ruled Kashmir for over two centuries, making it into one of the most powerful empires in the sub-continent, held in check both the Arabs and the Tibetans. The primary religion of the people was Hinduism, with an equal mix of both Vaishnavites and Shaivites, even though the ruling family was fastidiously Shaivite. At the same time, a small minority of Buddhists did exist, indicating religious tolerance.

Subsequently, Sura, one of the ministers of Utpalapida, brought the Karkota dynasty to an end by promoting Avantivarman, the son of Sukhavarman, to the throne and laying the foundation of the Utpala dynasty.

Avantivarman (855-883 CE) made himself illustrious by virtue of his peaceful pursuits, conscientious care of his subjects and liberal patronage of arts and learning. He did not launch an ambitious career of conquests. Aided by his wise and faithful minister, Sura, the great king devoted his energies to the consolidation of his kingdom by subduing the unruly opponents and turbulent chiefs and bringing back the much-needed peace and prosperity to the country. The king and his relatives and ministers built many temples, *mathas*, and *viharas*. He was a staunch Vaishnavite and built one of the finest temples at Avantipura, known as Avantisvamin, dedicated to Vishnu. However, out of great regard for his minister Sura who was a devotee of Shiva, he made the other temple Avantisvara dedicated to Shiva. It appears that Avantivarman made the required provision for the maintenance of the temples at Avantipura and the ritualistic worship of the images by lavish endowments.

Once when the king went to offer worship in a temple, he was shocked to find that the deity had been offered only a wild vegetable, for he remembered that he had provided adequately for its upkeep. When he asked the priests the reason for what he had seen, they told him that the villages assigned for the

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upkeep of the temple had been taken over by Dhanva, a *Damara* known to his minister. The king left the place in haste by telling them that he was not well. When Sura came to know what had happened in the temple, he immediately summoned *Damara* and had his head cut off right in front of the deity. After that, the king felt better.

The king's court was enriched by great philosophers and poets. Among these are Bhatta Kallata, the pupil of Vasagupta, the founder of the Spandasastra branch of Kashmir Shaiva Philosophy, Kavi Ratnakara and Anandavardhana. Their extant works occupy a high position in the old Sanskrit literature of Kashmir.

Avantivarman's reign is also known for the excellent work of water management by Suyya, which put an end to recurrent floods and the resultant famines. Suyya was born in mysterious circumstances, for he was found by a *Chandala* woman as an infant in a wayside pot and promptly taken by her to another woman who brought him up as Suyya, named after that woman. Because of his intelligence and education, he became a household tutor.

Whenever and wherever Suyya heard people talk about the problem of floods, he would tell them that he had a solution for the problem but needed means to put that into effect. Many people considered him just a braggart. Since the king was worried and desperate, he placed his treasure at Suyya's disposal. Suyya filled a pot with gold coins and dropped it in the submerged village of Nandaka; then he went to Yakshadara or *Dyara-gul* (meaning 'the place of money') near Khadanyar, Baramulla and threw some more money into the river. Everyone except the king thought that he had gone crazy. But the famished people who had watched Suyya throwing money in the water immediately jumped into the river to find the coins and thus cleared the bed of rocks which had rolled down from the hillside and blocked the river. Then he raised embankments on both sides of the river to ensure that no rocks rolled into it. The water that had flooded major parts of the Valley found an outlet and flowed out smoothly.

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After this, Suyya worked on regulating the flow of the Vitasta (Jhelum) so that it flowed into the Wular Lake. He also created a network of tributaries to see that water flowed into the right places. Suyya had many villages reclaimed by having circular embankments raised all around them to keep out the water so that they looked like round bowls (*Kunda*). As a result of these projects, hundreds of villages were reclaimed and crops grew unhindered. Suyya built a town named Suyyapur (present-day Sopore) on the bank of the river Jhelum. He prohibited the killing of fish and waterfowl in Wular Lake.

Avantivarman succeeded in giving his people a peaceful and prosperous administration. He abhorred violence and was known for his pious acts. When he sensed that his stay in the world was about to end, he went to a place near the shrine of Jyesheswara, where he spoke to Sura about his love for Vishnu. While listening to the recitation of the Bhagavad Gita, he passed away in 883 CE.

Avantivarman's son Samkaravarman (883-902 CE) succeeded him, but many descendants of Utpala contested his succession. When another councilor put forth the claim of Sukhavarman to the throne, and several other kinsmen followed suit, Samkaravarman had to fight all of them to consolidate his kingship, in which he was helped by Sura's son.

After subduing his enemies from within his kingdom, the king revived the tradition of conquering other kingdoms. He captured Darvabhisara and gained victory over the king of Gurjara, who gave a part of his dominion to him. On his return from his expeditions, the king built many towns and cities. One of them that he named after his own name was Samkarapura (present-day Pattan). Though he tried to beautify it by stealing valuable artefacts from Lalitaditya's Parihaspura, it did not flourish the way it should have.

Soon after this, Samkaravarman was seized by greed and started oppressing his subjects. He stole money from the temples that their keepers had earned by selling incense and other items of worship. Under the pretext of better

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supervision, he looted sixty-four temples. He introduced forced labor, and imposed fines arbitrarily on the villagers. Kalhana calls him "foremost among fools," who, working under the baneful influence of Kayasthas, indulged in such "sinful acts". His exactions were so anti-people that his son Gopalavarman was compelled to tell him that his people had not only to contend with plagues and famines but also the greed of their king. When he pleaded with him to shun his ways, the king paid no heed to him and treated him with scorn.

The king showed no respect for the poets of the day and did not provide any allowance for them, including even the known ones like Bhallata. He avoided speaking the refined Sanskrit language, took to the vulgar speech of the drunkards, and killed people treacherously for no reason at all. Kalhana writes that because of his wicked ways, he was cursed by his people and lost almost two dozen of his children for unknown reasons.

When one of his 'lords of the gate' at Viranaka died due to his negligence, Samkaravarman became so angry that he destroyed the place and then moved to regions beyond that to earn the homage of terror-stricken kings. On his way back, he was hit by an enemy arrow. Sensing that his death was near, he ordered his ministers to save his army and told his queen Sugandha to take care of his minor son Gopalavarman. The ministers moved back the army and kept the body of the dead king in a sitting position with the help of chords to let his head shake before the kings who had come to pay homage to him. Only when the ministers entered their home territory did they reveal his death and perform his funeral rites.

Gopalavarman (902-904 CE) became king under the guardianship of Sugandha. She fell in love with Prabhakaradeva, one of the ministers, who plundered money from the treasury and gave away territories gained by him to Lallaya, a Brahmin king of a part of present-day Afghanistan. Gopalavarman was upset by his arrogant ways and his greed. Fearing the king's anger, the man in charge of the treasury asked one of his relatives to use sorcery against the king, which hastened his death. Gopalavarman's brother, too, died within ten

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days of becoming king. Sugandha (904-906 CE) became the new ruler and remained in power for two years with the support of a group of soldiers called *Tantrins*. [In early medieval Kashmir, the rule of the Utpala dynasty in the Vale of Kashmir was dominated by the rivalry of two military factions, the *Tantrins* and the *Ekangas*. Their vying led to the enthronement of new monarchs and the dethronement of others. *Tantrins* were a strong military class organization.] Because nobody from the dynasty had survived to occupy the throne after her, she wanted it for one of her relatives, Nirjitavarman, but the ministers did not accept that. Instead, the *Tantrins* put his son Partha on the throne, and Sugandha had to leave. She tried to make a comeback with the help of *Ekangas* (*Kengs* in present-day Kashmir), but was defeated by *Tantrins*, who imprisoned her and then put her to death.

Since Partha (906-921 CE) was a minor, the throne was managed by his father, who paid money to *Tantrins* to stay safe. The woes of the people were compounded by the onset of famine, which made the greedy ministers sell food to them at exorbitant prices. Thousands of people perished because of hunger. Subsequently, Partha was overthrown by his own father, Nirjitavarman (921-923 CE), with the support of the *Tantrins*. The father lived for a brief while, but before his death, he put his other son Chakravarman (923-933 CE) on the throne. After ruling for ten years under the guardianship of his mother and grandmother, he was deposed by the *Tantrins*, who put Suravarman (933-934 CE), the son of Nirjitavarman from another wife, on the throne. Since he did not pay the *Tantrins* well, they removed him after one year, brought back Partha for a year and then Chakravarman to the throne. Since he, too, had no money to pay the *Tantrins*, he ran away from there after one year. He was joined by his minister Samkaravardhana, who sent his brother Sambhuvardhana (935-936 CE) to negotiate with the *Tantrins* for the throne, but he worked with them for his own claim to the throne. Meanwhile, Chakravarman got the support of a powerful *Damara* named Samgrama and marched against Samkaravardhana, who had patched up with his brother. In the fierce battle that followed, one brother was killed and the other was caught

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and executed. That is why Kalhana's remark that the kings "resembled the bubbles produced [in the water] by a downpour of rain on a dull day".

After assuming kingship, Chakravarman indulged in evil and wicked actions and gave himself up to a life of pleasure. When a *Domba* singer came to see him with his daughters Hamsi and Nagalata, he at once fell for them and, overlooking their low caste, made Hamsi his chief queen. The king legitimized his sinful conduct by saying that "as snow dissolves snow, so too one sin does the other". Unhappy with the king's ways, the *Damaras* waited for an opportunity to get rid of him. One night, when they found him unarmed, they attacked him. The king ran into the room of his queen, where they killed him in her arms. His other wives were so angry with him that they urged his assailants to crush his knees with stones while he lay dying.

Chakravarman's death cleared the way for the ministers to help Partha's son, Unmattavanti (937-939 CE), to occupy the throne so that they could indulge themselves the way they wanted. The king, too, joined them and let one of them, Parvagupta, dance naked in the assembly hall. Parvagupta became influential in the court and encouraged the king to destroy his own family for his safety. His ministers killed his parents, and the son of Parvagupta plunged his dagger into the heart of his dead father. The *kayasthas* replaced the *Damaras* as the new group of exploiters.

Oblivious to what was happening within his kingdom, the king lost himself in senseless pleasures. He threw daggers into the hollows of the breasts of naked women; he cut open the wombs of pregnant women to see the child inside; and cut the limbs of laborers to test how much they could endure. Because of his evil ways, his servant girls, just before his death, declared Suravarman as his son and put him on the throne, which he could hold on to only for a few days. Kamalavardhana, the commander-in-chief of the forces, deposed the king and waited for the support of Brahmins to occupy the throne, but in vain.

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Meanwhile, the wife of the deceased king pleaded with the Brahmins that her son Yasaskara (939-948 CE) be made king, to which they agreed. The new king meant well, revived the peaceful ways of the past and freed people from fear. The land became so safe that people left the doors of their homes open. He also restored people's hope in getting justice by deciding cases that even the judges had failed to decide. In spite of being honest and a man of integrity, he let evil beings flourish under his very nose. The courtesan he raised to the rank of a queen carried on an affair with a *chandala*.

When Yasaskara fell ill, he passed on the throne to Varnata, a distant relative. He bypassed the claim of his son, Samgramadeva, because he was not sure that he had sired him. But because Varnata did not show any concern for him, he could not be king for more than a day. Parvagupta ensured that the throne passed on to Samgramadeva. Then Yasaskara left for his *mattha* to die there, but when he did not look like dying, he was poisoned by Parvagupta's men.

Because of Parvagupta, Samgramadeva ruled under the guardianship of his grandmother. Slowly, Parvagupta (949-950 CE) got rid of the grandmother, took control of the kingdom and tried to kill the king by witchcraft, but failed. So, he killed him in his palace and threw his body in the Vitasta. Samgramdeva's reign lasted for just a year and a half, during which time he continued with his wicked ways. When he died of oedema, he was succeeded by his son Kshemagupta (950-958 CE), who devoted his time to dice, liquor, and women. The royal assembly lost its character and was "filled with whores, villains, idiots, and corrupters of boys". The levels of depravity touched such a low that his courtiers offered their wives to him for his pleasure. The only significant moment of his life which proved hugely important later was his marriage with Didda, a beautiful but physically disabled daughter of Simharaja, the lord of Lohara [Lohara is situated about 25 miles west of Katra and about 35 miles south of Rajouri in the present-day Jammu province]. After eight years of his dissipated lifestyle, the king contracted fever during a jackal hunt and died in his *mattha* in 958 CE.

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Kshemagupta's son Abhimanyu I (958-972 CE) ruled under the guardianship of his mother, Didda, who got rid of Phalguna, a minister during her husband's time, and successfully countered a rebellion by bribing their associates, including Yasodhara, who was given a good position in the army. When he inflicted a heavy defeat on one of the neighboring kings and exacted a tribute from him, some of her advisors told her to banish him, but before she could do anything, he besieged her. She was saved by her faithful minister Naravahana. In spite of this, she ill-treated the minister and drove him to suicide.

Didda recalled Phalguna, and he became her lover. Disgusted with her behavior, Abhimanyu died of drug consumption. His death made her a pious woman for about a year, during which time she built *matthas* and *viharas*. Then she ruled on behalf of her grandson Nandigupta from 973 to 975 CE. She killed him by witchcraft and continued with her rule on behalf of another grandson Bhimagupta, from 975 to 981 CE. During this time, she took Tunga, (a Khasa buffalo herdsman from Poonch who had come to Kashmir with his brothers) as her lover. When Bhimagupta showed his displeasure over her behavior, she imprisoned him and tortured him to death.

Queen Didda's rule represents the peak of women's power in Kashmir, which unusually had many women rulers both before and after her. She is sometimes called the Catherine of Kashmir. Didda ruled for the next 22 years (981-1003 CE) with absolute power until she died at the age of 79. She periodically quashed rebellions by using her standard combination of bribes, appeasement and ferocious reprisal. Her lover Tunga became the chief minister and his brothers occupied positions of power and influence. The entire period of her rule witnessed many intrigues and murders. Tunga had to quell rebellions and keep the enemies quiet. According to Kalhana: "Those treacherous ministers who for 60 years...had robbed 16 kings, from Gopala to Abhimanyu, of their dignity, lives and riches, were quickly exterminated by the energy of Queen Didda".

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There is an interesting story about how she chose an heir. She called for many boys from her maternal family and placed a heap of fruit in front of them, challenging them to pick up the maximum number. The boys started grabbing the fruit and fighting with one another. At the end of it, her brother's son Sangramaraja had the maximum number, without actually engaging in any physical fighting. He had managed to incite the other boys to fight while he calmly gathered up the booty. Impressed by his political acumen, Didda declared him her heir. She made both Sangramaraja and Tunga swear a holy oath that they would work with each other, which created great stability for the next two decades. Thus, on her death, a new dynasty took power in Kashmir, the Lohara dynasty. They belonged to the Khasa tribe occupying a hill fortress called Loharakota in the Pir Panjal range of mountains. Mahmud of Ghazni unsuccessfully attacked Kashmir twice, in 1015 and 1023. Sangramaraja was almost the only king in India to beat him back, partly because of the strong army and administration created by Didda. Sangramaraja (1003-1028 CE) let Tunga stay in charge of the affairs of the state, which included dealing with revolts and rebellions.

When the Sahi ruler Trilochanpala sought the king's help to fight against Mahmud Ghazni, he sent Tunga with a large army, but he lost the battle because of his recklessness and overconfidence. Because the king was upset by Tunga's defeat and also by the activities of his son Kandarpasimha, who flaunted his arrogance unabashedly, he joined Tunga's opponents to get rid of them. One day, when Tunga and his son were about to enter his court, they were attacked and killed by the men set up for the job.

Al-Beruni has recorded that Mahmud Ghazni made another attack from the side of Tosamaidan (near Gulmarg) to enter Kashmir, but he had to abandon it because of heavy snow. Kalhana's narrative is silent over this incident, though it is a significant one because it shows that Muslim invaders were constantly trying to make inroads into Kashmir.

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After Sangramaraja's death, his son Harmanya ruled barely for three weeks, for he was killed by his mother, Srilekha, who wanted the throne for herself. But the ministers put Ananta (deva) on the throne, who ruled from 1028 to 1063 CE. He was lucky to survive an intrigue by the brother of Samgramaraja. Because of his incompetence, he depended heavily on the help of two Sahi princes, Rudrapala and Diddapala. He was so given to pleasures that he did not hesitate to even pawn his crown.

An important turning point in Ananta's life was his marriage with Suryamati, the daughter of the lord of Jalandhar. She was a strong woman who put a check on his profligacy and gave a sense of direction to his life. Because of this, he led many armed expeditions, in which he won some victories and suffered a few defeats.

Suryamati's partiality towards her son Kalasa (also known as Ranaditya) led her to force Ananta to abdicate in his favor, but because he could not handle the affairs of the kingdom, Ananta took control of the kingdom once again. Kalasa remained just a nominal king (1063-1089 CE) and gave himself up to depravity and licentious ways, but she prevailed upon her husband not to punish him and shift to the temple of Vijyashera. But that did not stop Kalasa from organizing an attack against his father. The queen had to intervene again to put a stop to their ugly confrontation. Even that did not last long. Kalasa mounted one more attack against his father, in which the temple was burnt and Ananta lost his treasure. When Kalasa decreed that Ananta go into exile, it led to a fierce altercation between Ananta and his wife, which ended in his suicide. To atone for her behavior, she committed *sati*.

The death of his parents had a sobering influence on Kalasa's behavior. Since there was no threat of interference in his work, he took care of the affairs of the state with a sense of responsibility. He mended fences with his son Harsha, effected an improvement in the state administration and its finances, punished corrupt officials and instilled a sense of hope and confidence in his subjects. After ensuring peace and prosperity of his people, he led successful expeditions

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to consolidate his kingdom and wielded great influence among the smaller hill states around Kashmir.

Kalasa's last years were full of bitterness because of the actions of his son Harsha, whose selfish cronies incited him to revolt against his father. Kalasa wanted to hear from him that he had been instigated to go against him, but he refused to say anything. When Kalasa felt that there was a threat to Harsha's life from the people who had conspired with him, he put him in prison and also ensured that his life was spared, but called his son Utkarsha from Lohara to succeed him. Before his death in Martand temple, Kalasa very much wanted to meet Harsha but could not.

Utkarsha occupied the throne in 1089, but only for twenty-two days. Having been away from the kingdom for long years, he could not establish rapport with his ministers. The people, too, felt unhappy with him, for they found him greedy and stingy. The widows of Kalasa complained that he was disrespectful towards them and did not provide adequately for their needs. He also lost the sympathy of his half-brother Malla and had to contend with his rebellion. In this state of confusion, his plan to murder Harsha in his prison failed. Harsha won the sympathy of his guards, managed to escape from the prison and seized the throne, forcing Utkarsha to commit suicide.

Harsha (1089-1101 CE), who was the great-grandson of Sangramaraja, had a complex personality, an embodiment of too many contraries, of good and bad qualities—kind and cruel, generous and miserly, noble and wicked. Kalhana has described him and his actions and also the events during his time in great detail because these were known to him from his father, who worked for the king. Harsha was handsome and strong, bold and courageous. He had mastered many arts and sciences, knew many languages, was a known poet whose songs were sung in the royal court and remembered even after his death, and had a sound knowledge of music too.

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Harsha started his rule quite intelligently. Although the ministers and officials of his father's time had not treated him well, he retained most of them. Largely because of this, his half-brother Malla could not garner enough support for his intrigue against him. Harsha devoted his energies to make his city beautiful and inaugurated new fashions in dress and ornaments, and encouraged his subjects to follow his ways. He honored men of learning and spent nights with musicians and dancers in his assembly hall that was lighted with one thousand lamps. The coins of his times testify to the affluence and prosperity of the early phase of his reign.

Soon after the bright start to his reign, the complexity in his character came into full play to create serious problems for him, for it led him to do actions that showed his lack of judgment and honesty. His commander of forces, Kandarpa, succeeded in making Sangramapala surrender and pay tribute to Harsha, but he pushed him into banishment. He made his half-brother Jayaraja surrender, but soon after that, he executed him. He executed Dhammata and his sons on mere suspicion, forgetting that Dhammata had helped him in his mission against Jayaraja. Under the baneful influence of his unreliable friends, he murdered many more people and thus lost the goodwill and support of large sections of his subjects, who had looked forward to his rule with great promise and hope.

Because of his extravagant ways and his senseless indulgences, Harsha got into acute financial troubles and used highly harmful and unacceptable expedients to tide over his finances. He ransacked the temples for whatever had been stored in them for centuries. Worse still, he took out the divine images from their sacred confines and defiled them publicly. The ones in metals like gold and silver were melted for adding to his wealth. Kalhana compares his acts of vandalism with those of Turushikas, which confirms that several kinds of outsiders had a visible presence in the Valley during his time and are supposed to have formed a part of his army.

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All temples in his kingdom except four (two of them Buddhist) were damaged. This behavior was so un-Hindu and so characteristically Islamic that Kalhana reports: "In the village, the town or Srinagara there was not one temple which was not despoiled by ... king Harsha". Far from representing a separate Hindu tradition of iconoclasm, Harsha of Kashmir was a somewhat peculiar (viz. fellow-traveler) representative of the Islamic tradition of iconoclasm. Like Mahmud Ghazni and Aurangzeb, he despoiled and looted Hindu shrines, not non-Hindu ones. Influenced by the Muslims in his employ, he behaved like a Muslim fanatic.

Not content with the loot that Harsha got from the temples, he imposed a heavy burden of taxes on his hapless subjects and did not spare even human excrement from his wide net of taxes. The result of his actions was a strong surge of anger among the people, who were constrained to live miserable lives. His indulgences, too, touched alarming proportions. He lived in incest with his sisters and the widows of his father.

Harsha's military expeditions betrayed his injudiciousness, for several of them ended disastrously. In one such expedition, he was a witness to the valor of two brothers, Uccala and Sussala. He soon gave in to baseless rumors about them, that they were a threat to his throne, and decided to get rid of them. Fortunately for them, they were able to escape with the help of *Damaras*, who had already turned against him because of his excesses that bordered on the insane. The *Damaras* had to put up with his cruelties, for he executed them with unbelievable barbarity. Their severed heads were woven into arches and garlands for people to see and fear for their lives. Because of this, some of them thought of the two escaped brothers as possible alternatives to the tyrannical rule of Harsha, especially because they could trace their ancestry to the native place of Didda.

Encouraged by the possibilities of support from the disgruntled elements among the *Damaras*, Uccala mounted pressure on Harsha from one side of his kingdom but was defeated by his forces. He managed to escape, and the king

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did not pursue him. His brother Sussala mounted pressure on the king from another side of the kingdom, which helped Uccala to launch another attack and gain a victory against the royal forces. Caught in these multiple attacks and confused by how to deal with the two brothers, Harsha wreaked vengeance against their father, Malla, who had been living the life of a recluse in the city. This inflamed the two brothers to launch more attacks against him. Sussala marched to Srinagar but was beaten back by Harsha's son Bhoja. Uccala came from another direction and was able to reach near the royal palace because of the treachery of Naga, who was supposed to take care of the city. The king came out to face the enemy, but an elephant who got wounded in the battle led to panic in his troops, and he had to beat a hasty retreat. Uccala's forces set the building adjoining the palace on fire. Seventeen women of the royal household, including the chief queen, read it as a sign of the end of Harsha's hold on his kingdom and burnt themselves to death, which forced him to leave the palace. The *Damaras* were joined by mobs to ransack the palace and take away whatever they could lay their hands on.

Since Harsha could not think of any concrete plan to face the attacks of the two brothers, his sympathizers started deserting him. He sent his faithful Canpaka, father of Kalhana, to help his son Bhoja. Uccala virtually gave Harsha a chance to flee the palace. Kalhana provides a detailed description of how Harsha moved swiftly from one hiding place to another to escape the enemy and how the desertions in the ranks of his followers went on increasing till he was left with just a handful. During this time, he was saddened by the death of his son Bhoja. While staying in the house of a mendicant, his location was traced by the enemy soldiers. When they finally reached him, he faced them like a warrior but could not save himself. The soldiers killed him and carried his severed head to Uccala, who had it burnt.

When Uccala (1101-1111 CE) occupied the throne, he gave independent charge of the territory in Lohara to his brother and dealt with the *Damaras* by adopting a careful policy of setting them up against each other. By keeping the *Damaras* busy with their affairs, he focused his attention on the lower classes of

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society and punished all the officials who were found guilty of corruption or dereliction of duty. Though his brother had an independent charge of a territory, he still felt unhappy and launched an attack against him, which was repulsed and he was forced to go back to his place.

Bhoja's son, Bhiksacara, too, created problems for Uccala. At the time of taking control of the kingdom, Uccala had spared his life and taken him in his care. But after some time, he suspected that he could be a source of trouble and decided to get rid of him. But before he could do anything, Bhiksacara was taken to Malwa by one of his relatives.

When Sussala had a son Jayasimha, the two brothers reconciled. But a fresh threat to Uccala came from Chudda, who hatched a plot against him with the support of the disgruntled elements from the *Damara* camp. They attacked him in his palace during the night. He fought valiantly with a small dagger, the only weapon that he had on his person at that time, but he was overpowered and killed. Chudda's brother Radda sat on the throne only for a day, for he was killed by another *Damara,* Gargachandra.

Finding no worthy successor to the throne, Gargachandra managed to put Chudda's half-brother Salhana (1111-1112 CE) on the throne. He had nothing that could make him worthy of the throne. Kalhana writes that "Neither political wisdom, nor valor, neither cunning nor straightforwardness, neither liberality nor greed—nothing was prominent in this king's character". The new king was king only in name for the power was exercised by the *Damaras.*

When Sussala learnt that his brother had died, he sensed his chance of becoming the king. So, he attempted to enter the kingdom with his forces but was pushed back by Gargachandra. But when Gargachandra came to know that Salhana was plotting his death, he thought it prudent to open negotiations with Sussala and to cement this new bond with him. He offered one of his

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daughters in marriage to him and another one to his son. Sussala entered the kingdom without any opposition and Salhana was put in prison.

Sussala's regime (1112-1120 CE) began with stern measures against people who were instrumental in the murder of his brother. He destroyed their families and did not spare even their children. But he was gentle towards the rest of his subjects. Whenever they had to reckon with any problems, he took all the required measures to provide solutions and funds for their use. To ensure that he did not have to meet the fate of his brother, he took adequate measures against all those *Damaras* who could pose a threat to him.

To improve the administration of his kingdom, he made Gauran, a *kayastha,* his prime minister, who saw to it that the king's treasury remained full all the time. Being a *kayastha* he resorted to sordid tricks to make that happen and the king, too, became greedy. The revenue officers harassed people and the king accumulated riches that he put in safe custody in Lohara.

Many people close to the king did not like the power enjoyed by Gargachandra. They created distrust between the two by talking to them against each other. The result was that Gargachandra and his three sons were imprisoned by the king. After about three months, they were strangled during the night by ropes and then thrown into a river with stones tied to their necks.

After this, Sussala went to Lohara to build diplomatic connections—to renew contact and build friendships with the chiefs of the hill states, little realizing that his people could interpret his absence from his kingdom in different ways. Many people thought that he was only taking money out of their place to enrich Lohara. And, as if to confirm this, the king oppressed the inhabitants and reduced the quantum of money spent on them. To get over the public disquiet, he removed Gouraka and other officers who worked for him. This quick change in the administration increased discontent among the ministers and resulted in great financial losses too.

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The result of all these changes was that the discontent spread fast. When the *Damaras* expressed their anger over the king's actions, he acted with utmost cruelty. He killed them and sent their bodies to their relatives garnished as dishes; to some, he sent chopped parts from their bodies, such as ears and nose. The Brahmins expressed their resentment by observing fasts.

In these troubled times, the king had to contend with Bhoja's son Bhiksacara who had been invited to his court by Somapala, the chief of Rajapuri. So, he led an expedition against Somapala. Although he tried his best to make inroads into his domain and spent nearly seven months to make that happen, he could not succeed.

His absence from his place had sharpened discontent among his people and resulted in an open rebellion, which the *Damaras* that he had relied upon could not control. Sussala joined them to fight the ones who were against him but suffered a series of defeats. Out of sheer frustration, he executed the ones who were hostages with him. This created a new wave of resentment among his troops, which, coupled with the unhappiness that was spreading fast among his people, forced him to send his son, his queen, and other members of his family to Lohara.

The *Damaras* realized that to succeed against Sussala, they needed a common rallying point, which led them to think of Bhiksacara. So, with him as their leader, they pressed on with their push towards Srinagar. Sussala fought them but without any concrete gain. Inside the kingdom, the continuous fasting by the Brahmins caused him great harassment. He offered bribes to their prominent organizers to put an end to their fasts but with no success. He could also not do anything to stop the steady stream of desertions from amongst his troops. He gave away costly dresses, gold, and jewels to his soldiers, but they continued to be disrespectful to him. This forced him to think of his personal safety. So, he bribed some of his opponents to buy a safe passage to Lohara. This led to the triumphal march of *Damaras* into the city, where they were joined by the troops and officials left behind by Sussala.

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Bhiksacara occupied the throne for just about six months (1120-1121 CE). The newly-acquired kingship kept him busy with the pleasures of royal power. The *Damaras*, who had made common cause with him, got busy fighting each other. The result was that the floundering economy received a shattering blow. Bhiksacara's general, Bhimba, led an attack against Lohara, in which he was helped by Sompala of Rajapuri and the Turushikas, but they were routed by Sussala. Then Sussala mounted an attack against Bhiksacara, compelling him to flee the place and seek the protection of Prithvihara. He helped him to resume attacks, and Bhiksacara's bravery resulted in small victories but no major gains. Sussala capitalized on dissensions within the ranks of *Damaras* and forced Bhiksacara to go back. Then he changed his strategy by employing foreigners in his army, who helped him to defeat Bhiksacara, and once again come to power (1121-1128).

Barely two years after Sussala had regained power, a huge fire reduced the capital city to ashes, destroying all the stored food, which caused a massive famine. It is said that *Damaras* also burnt the famous temple of Chakradhara. The death of Sussala's chief queen Meghamanjari accentuated his dejection, and he decided to pass on the crown to his son Jayasimha, who had just returned from Lohara, but because he was not sure of his move, he did not hand over the government to him. Jayasimha gave proof of his valor in a battle soon after that. This made the intriguers busy, for they told Sussala that his son was a traitor. Because of this, he distrusted Jayasimha and kept a steady watch on him but did not imprison him.

To consolidate his position by destroying Bhiksacara, Sussala entered into a secret pact with Utpala, the agent of a powerful baron. He was warned by several people that Utpala was not trustworthy, but he was not willing to hear anything against him. He, in fact, told Utpala what people thought about him. This made Utpala act with caution and also with speed. He went to see Sussala when he had just finished his bath and had no weapon on his person. With the help of his associates, he attacked him with daggers and took away his dead body.

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The murder of Sussala caused great sorrow to Jayasimha. Since the conditions within the kingdom were far from normal, some of his well-wishers advised him to leave for a safer place, but he stood his ground and thought of a strategy to stabilize his position. He announced a general amnesty for all those who had joined his father's enemies. This did not prevent Bhiksacara from making one more attempt to regain his lost throne, but his movement was stalled by heavy snowfall. And because one of his chief supporters, Pancachandra, joined Jayasimha, he, once again, lost his chance. Soon after, he made one more attempt but failed again because Jayasimha bought his supporters. Because of his tactical moves, Jayasimha succeeded in staying in power from 1128 to 1149 CE. What his father failed to do, he did successfully by his mature skill of plotting intrigues and minimizing the damage caused by the rise of small and big barons who had the power and means to curtail the independence of kings.

Jayasimhas's reign is a story of the moves he played by pitting the rising *Damaras* against each other. His chief minister, Laksmaka, killed his father's murderer. His commander Sujji drove out Bhiksacara. Sujji became the victim of Laksmaka's intrigue and had to run away to go to Bhiksacara. His attempt to mount an attack was foiled by Laksmaka, which eventually led to his death.

Sujji escaped to join Jayasimha's enemy Lothana, who had set himself up in Lohara. He was deposed by Jayasimha's half-brother Mallarjuna, who paid tribute to him. Jayasimha then used Sujji, whom he had reinstated, to drive Mallarjuna out of that place. Soon after, he engineered Sujji's murder along with his supporters and relatives. When Lothana reappeared with help from his neighboring *Damaras,* such as Alamkarachakra, Jayasimha sent his army to besiege them, compelling the *Damaras* to deliver Lothana and another leader to him. Likewise, an attack by Bhoja was repulsed successfully.

When peace and stability were restored in his land, Jayasimha devoted time to pious acts of rebuilding ruined temples and *matthas.* He also cultivated friendly relations with foreign kingdoms, like that of Kanauj and Konkan.

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For the last five years of Jayasimha's reign, we have to rely on the account provided by another historian Jonaraja, who takes it right to the end of the Hindu rule and beyond. He admits that his work is different from that of Kalhana's, for he is concerned only with what he calls the "outline of the history of kings". Because of this, his account provides only a few details about Jayasimha's last years. He describes them as a time of prosperity, for he enjoyed the blessings of the goddesses of learning and fortune. He was also lucky to secure the services of Mallachandra, who displayed valor in the king's campaign against the Yavanas and Turushikas (foreigners, generally Greeks and Muslims). Interestingly, Malla did not kill those who were sleeping, including the king of the Yavanas; he only put his signed shoes on his head. Because of that, the king surrendered his fortune to Jayasimha. The same sketchiness characterizes Jonaraja's narration of the king who came after Jayasimha, who was murdered by Turushikas in 1154 CE.

Jayasimha was succeeded by his son Parmanuka (1154-1164 CE). Instead of caring for his subjects, he spent his energies accumulating as much wealth as possible, but it did not stay with him. Two of his ministers, Prayaga and Janaka, defrauded him of his riches by using charms against him. That he found time and money to raise structures is borne by their archaeological remains, which also confirm the prosperity of his times.

The seven-year rule of his son Varttideva (1164-1171CE) is dismissed by Jonaraja in one sentence, which could imply that it was totally uneventful. Since the king left behind no heir to the throne, the Lohara dynasty came to an end.

In the absence of a successor, the people in power chose Vopyadeva (1171-1180 CE) as their king, whose stupidity can be judged by his telling his ministers to increase the size of the blocks of stone by "making them drink the milk of beasts". Jonaraja considers him "the very model of a dunce".

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Vopyadeva was succeeded by his brother Jassaka (1180-1198 CE), who was made king by Lavanya-*Damaras* only because they knew that, like his brother, he was a dunce and, therefore, the right kind of person for allowing them to use the royal authority for their own profit. Jonaraja states it thus: "The very faults of some persons are advantageous to them like merits". Two Brahmin brothers, Kshuksha and Bhima, were able to win the affection of the king and even emboldened to dream of capturing his throne, but did not do so for fear of the Lavanyas.

Jassaka's son Jagadeva (1198-1212 CE), was a powerful and well-meaning person and strove to make his people happy by "rooting out evil laws of the country". Since this did not suit the interests of his selfish ministers, he was forced to leave the country. But soon, he made a comeback because of the support of one of his loyal ministers Gunakararahula. The king made his subjects prosperous, but not for long. A wicked person called Padma made a show of affection and friendship towards him and succeeded in poisoning him secretly. Nalanda, the great educational institution of that time, was destroyed by Bakhtiyar Khilji, an invader belonging to a Turkic tribe long settled in what is now southern Afghanistan. Shakyashri Bhadra of Kashmir, the last abbot of Nalanda, fled to Tibet around 1204 CE.

Fearing for his life, Jagadeva's son Rajadeva fled to Kishtwar but was brought back by the enemies of Padma, who put him in prison. He was lucky to be freed from there because Padma was killed by a *Chandala*. This cleared his way for occupying the throne. Rajadeva occupied the throne for twenty-three years (1213-1236 CE) but without any firm control over his kingdom because he was constantly threatened by Lavanya barons. One of them, Baladyachandra, lord of Lohara, occupied nearly half of the city of Srinagar and stamped his authority on it by building a *matha* in his own name. Brahmins were persecuted by him as they had elected Rajadeva as King. Rajadeva built Rajapuri (present-day Rajouri) and Rajolaka.

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After Rajadeva, his son Sangramadeva (1236-1252 CE) inherited the throne. He struck terror in the hearts of barons, who had been a source of trouble to the earlier rulers. Out of affection for his brother Surrya, he made him his viceroy. Instead of being loyal to the king, Surya joined hands with his enemies. Soon after, he lost their support and was caught and executed. This, however, emboldened the Brahmins to come under the leadership of the sons of Kalhana and capture power. The king took shelter with the lord of Rajapuri.

The kingdom was left at the mercy of *Damaras,* who did their best to suck the very life-blood of the people, who had lost all hope of seeing the king back on his throne. But the king did come back, though it is unclear after how much time, and defeated the sons of Kalhana, but did not kill them because they were Brahmins. Disregarding the favor done by the king to them by sparing their lives, he was still a hated figure for them. So, they, once again, plotted against him and murdered him in 1252 CE.

Sangramadeva's son Ramadeva (1252-1273 CE) became king after his father's death. Soon after ascending the throne, he executed the murderers of his father. Then he engaged the services of Prithviraj to work for the welfare of his people. He initiated a number of construction activities. He built a fort in his own name, his wife built a *matha* in her name, and he repaired the damaged temple of Vishnu at Utpalapura. Since Ramadeva had no children, he adopted the son of a Brahmin and named him Lakshamanadeva, who became king after him (1273-1286 CE). Though a learned man, he lacked the vigor of a warrior and was defeated and killed by Kajjala, a Turushika. He reigned for a little more than thirteen years.

The death of Lakshamanadeva caused grave confusion in the country, which helped Simhadeva (1286-1301 CE) become the king of a small part of the old kingdom. When he tried to claim his rule over Kashmir, he was openly contested by the lord of Lar, Sangramachandra. It was only after the latter's death that Simhadeva gained control over the kingdom, which had already suffered a reduction in size. He built a *matha* in the city and also observed

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rituals to please the god Vijayeshavara. His love for Shankara evaporated when he fell into bad company and lost his faith in God. When the daughter of his nurse looked like the mirror image of the king, the nurse's husband decided that he deserved to be punished. So, he sought the help of Kamasuha to kill him. That happened in 1301 CE.

Simhadeva's brother, Suhadeva, had a fairly long rule (1301-1320 CE); he was able to bring the whole of Kashmir under his control with the help of his efficient prime minister, Ramachandra, who was also a brave warrior and led victorious expeditions into regions that had been lost to it during earlier times. Ramachandra managed the affairs of the kingdom with efficiency, in which he was assisted by his daughter Kota.

During Suhadeva's reign, two persons who came from two different countries were received well by him and his prime minister. Very interesting stories have been associated with them, about which doubts have been raised by some later-day historians, largely because both of them are connected with the wiping away of Hindu rule and establishing the Muslim rule in Kashmir. Their entry into Kashmir confirms that by the time of Suhadeva's reign, the kingdom was no longer an insulated space. More and more people from areas outside the Valley had moved here in search of careers and sometimes even for help. In fact, evidence of this is available even during the times of Harsha, and several kings after him, who employed them in their respective armies.

The first outsider was an adventurer from Swat, Shah Mir, who Jonaraja has described as one who was bright like a sun, and whose bravery could be seen in the tears of his enemy's wives. Jonaraja also provides a definite reason for his decision to move into Kashmir. Once while wandering in the woods in search of game, he fell asleep and had a dream in which "the great goddess told him in words of nectar that the kingdom of Kashmira would come to his progeny". So, he moved into the kingdom with his relatives, was received well by King Suhadeva and was paid a salary too.

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A similar story about him that historians have used owes its origin to a work called *Tarikh-i-Firishta*, and used by Hasan in his history of Kashmir, both of which have been commented upon by K. N. Pandit in his *Ten Studies in Kashmir: History and Politics*. The main points of the story of Shah Mir, the descendant of a well-known tribe in Swadgir, are described by Pandit thus: "As a child once his saintly grandfather took him in his lap and said that he had a divine revelation that the child would become the ruler of Kashmir and his several generations would succeed him ... as the rulers of that land". Pandit also states that this has been rejected by Haidar Malik and another historian, R. K. Sharma, who states that Shah Mir was a Khasha from Panchagahvara Valley, which means that he belonged to the tribe of the "bandit highlanders ... habitually used to looting and plundering hapless people".

The second person who came to Kashmir was Lhachan Gaulbu Rinchana, aka Prince Rinchan, who came from Ladakh. Rinchana came to seek protection, along with his group of armed men, to escape getting killed in a war in which his family of Kalmanya Bhuteas was seriously involved.

Right at this time, Kashmir was attacked by Dulcha, a Tatar chief from Central Asia, with an army of more than sixty thousand men. Sahadeva was so demoralized by this heavy onslaught that he ran away to Kishtwar and left Ramachandra to fight the enemy on his own. Ramachandra hoped that Dulcha would be pacified by giving him money, which he collected by taxing his people, but that did not happen. Even after getting money, Dulcha did not leave the place. When he did leave finally after staying for over eight months, it was only because food had become scarce. He chose to return via passes that led to the plains but was caught up in a snowstorm, in which he perished along with his troops and whatever he had collected from the place. The people of the Valley who had been in hiding came out, as Jonaraja puts it, like mice coming out of their holes. When some other neighboring tribes learnt that Dulcha had left, they tried to intrude into the Valley but were successfully repulsed by Ramachandra. This emboldened Ramachandra to declare himself the king. Since Rinchana supported him during his struggle against Dulcha, he

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came into the limelight among the public, but Ramachandra's move did not please him because he, too, had dreamt of becoming the king. Since he did not want the dream to die, he planned a surprise attack on Ramachandra's army, which compelled him and his daughter to save their lives by escaping into the fort of Lar (Gagangir fort west of Sonamarg), from where he could fight Rinchana to regain his throne. His escape, though, gave Rinchana control of the kingdom.

Since Rinchana felt that he had no chance of scoring a victory against Ramachandra in a face-to-face war, he wisely chose a clever expedient to destroy him. In a carefully planned move, he sent his followers disguised as merchants with arms hidden in their flowing robes into the fort; they attacked Ramachandra and killed him before he could call for help. Simultaneously, he attacked the fort and took control of it because there was hardly any resistance from the defender's side.

Sensing that the general populace might not be too happy with him for having killed their king and also because he was an outsider, he took a number of steps to gain acceptability. He made friends with Ramachandra's son Ravanchandra by making him a minister and persuaded his daughter Kota to marry him and be his queen.

What happened soon after that is mired in controversies. One of the generally accepted views is that Rinchana was persuaded by his wife to convert to her faith, to which he agreed. So, he made a request to the religious head of the faith to admit him to their fold, but because he and the people he consulted could not ascertain his family antecedents, his request was denied. Then Rinchana was advised by Shah Mir to adopt the religion of the first person he would see in the morning. Since that person happened to be Bulbul Shah, Rinchana accepted the Muslim faith and became the first Muslim ruler of Kashmir. The controversy around this and the personality of Bulbul Shah has been discussed elaborately by Pandit in his book.

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As a king, Rinchana, now called Sultan Sadr-ud-Din (1320-1323 CE), proved quite efficient. He succeeded in breaking the stronghold of the barons, who had reduced kings into non-entities, gave clean administration to the people, and displayed extraordinary ability in discussing legal cases. He built a grand Khanqah, subsequently called Bulbul Lankar, now a *mohalla* in Srinagar. Shah Mir served as his chief advisor, and together they served the people to bring peace and order into their lives.

Rinchana could not escape the bane that had been the fate of earlier kings—of intrigues to capture the throne. In his case, the person who considered him the usurper of the throne was Udyanadeva, the brother of Suhadeva. With the help of a powerful baron Tukka, he attacked the palace, in which Rinchana received a blow on his head, which made him unconscious. The attackers mistook him for dead, which led to great disorder. But after a while, Rinchana gained consciousness and chased away the intruders, punished the ones who had been caught and rewarded the ones who had stayed loyal to him. But the blow to his head had resulted in a serious injury, which eventually caused his death. Before that, he had put his son Haider in the care of Shah Mir. Rinchana's rule lasted for three years.

When Kota Rani took over the reins of the kingdom, Udyanadeva came marching into it. Sensing what she thought was the best possible course in the interests of her people, she welcomed him as a king of the land and also married him.

Soon after this, when Achala, a Mongol-Turk, invaded the country, Udyanadeva, like his brother had done earlier, escaped to a safe place, leaving Kota Rani to take on the invader. With resolute courage, she pleaded with the people to fight the enemy. In this, she was supported by Shah Mir. But considering the huge army that Achala had brought with him, she thought it better to deal with him diplomatically. She told him that the throne could be his, provided he sent his army back to his country. Since Achala was motivated solely by greed, he agreed to her proposal and sent a major part of his troops

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back to his country. He retained only a small contingent with him. Then Kota Rani attacked him, captured him, and beheaded him publicly. When Udyanadeva heard of her success, he returned to her, and she once again accepted him meekly.

Even after Udyanadeva's return, Kota Rani continued to run the country quite efficiently. In spite of her popularity, disruptive forces of the past continued their activities. Intriguers worked hard to destabilize her and weaken her grip over her throne. In one such attempt, her commander-in-chief succeeded in capturing and imprisoning her in a fortress, from where she was able to come out without any harm because of the effort of her loyal minister Bhatta Bhikshana. After returning to her place, she mobilized her forces to inflict a crushing defeat on the disloyal rebel commander.

Shah Mir, who had all along acted like a loyal minister to Kota Rani, also harbored an ambition to be the king. But before doing anything to achieve his objective, he improved his image among the public by demonstrating his loyalty to the queen. Then he constantly frightened Udyanadeva by reminding him that the rightful heir to the throne, Haider, was in his care. More importantly, he established vital social and political connections with important barons through the marital alliances of his children. Because of this, Kota Rani had some inkling of his intentions. That is why she appointed Bikhshana Bhatta as her chief minister and the guardian of Bhola Ratan, her other son from Udyanadeva.

Even though Udyanadeva (1323-1338 CE) was a king only in name, his death changed the political scenario for Kota. She acted cleverly by making his death public only after ensuring that she was totally protected against any unexpected attack. She also made it known that her son Haider, from her earlier marriage, had no claim to the throne. After that, she declared herself to be the ruler of the land. Shah Mir accepted her move publicly, but subsequent events confirm that he had not given up on his dream. Kota Rani (1338-1339 CE) was a strong woman, well-versed in diplomacy strategies and had a good sense of

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administration. She is credited with constructing a canal called *Kut-Kol*, named after her, to save the city of Srinagar from frequent floods. The canal receives water from River Jhelum at the entry point of Srinagar and merges back with the river beyond the city limits.

According to *Tarikh-i-Sayid Ali* (1569), Kota Rani had a brother Ravan Raina (son of Ram Chandra! Possible wordplay by the writer). Ravan Raina had a son named Abdal Raina, a convert to Islam. It is claimed that Abdal Raina laid out Rajanakavatika (Garden of Rainas), the area now known as Rainawari.

As an astute politician, Shah Mir assessed that Kota's strength was her advisor and commander, Bhatta Bhikshana. So, he had to get rid of him, and for this, he evolved an elaborate stratagem. He let it be known that he was seriously ill and almost on his deathbed. So, Kota sent Bhatta to his place to enquire about his health. He had his bodyguards with him, but they stayed with Mir's servants and Bhatta was ushered into Mir's room. Mir put him at ease by giving him details about his ill health and then, all of a sudden, jumped out of his bed and killed him with his sword. For this well-planned murder, Kota could have arrested him, but she did not because some of her ministers advised her against it, which suggests that Mir had his men in her palace too. So, he escaped unscathed.

Given the situation in which Kota Rani functioned, it is not surprising that within months of her rule, there was trouble in another part of her kingdom, which demanded her personal attention. Soon after she had left the city to deal with it, Shah Mir came with a heavy force to take control of the city and declared himself the king. This led to a fierce battle between the forces of Shah Mir and Kota Rani. When things looked like going against Mir, he summoned all his newly-made friends to come to his help and they did, which tilted the scales in his favor. Kota stayed on in the fort which was in the middle of a lake, and Mir was in the town opposite the fort. Realizing that he could not afford to stay on in his position for long, he proposed to her that they share the throne and she be his queen, to which she seemed to have agreed.

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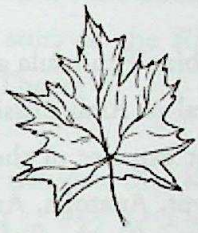
There are several versions of what happened after this. Some believe that, wearing her best bridal wear on the day of her marriage, she moved into the bridal chamber, killed herself with a dagger, and offered only her dead body to Mir. Another story, in the account of Jonaraja, is that they were not married;. Mir only shared her bed for one night and then put her in prison. In both these versions, Kota Rani ceased to be the ruler and the queen, and Shah Mir started the rule of the Muslims in Kashmir in the year 1339.



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Chapter 4

THE MUSLIM RULE

K. N. Pandit

Preamble

Islamic faith rose in the Arabian Peninsula around 632 CE. More than six centuries prior to the arrival of Arab missionaries in Kashmir, the desert warriors had overrun a vast expanse of the Byzantine Empire (636 CE), Sassanid Empire (637 CE), Egypt, Anatolia, Armenia and Turkestan (Central Asia) by 680 CE.

The Arab warriors did not come to Kashmir riding their swift horses and brandishing their swords. Kashmir Valley, a small land-locked geographical region situated far away in the mountains, was unknown to them; it did not figure in their routes of expedition or trade. By a strange quirk of destiny, the task of carrying the Islamic banner to Kashmir fell not to the warriors but to the proselytized Iranian and Turanian[a] (Turkistani) missionaries in the second half of the 14th century.

Unlike Iran and parts of Turan, there was no armed resistance worth the name by the indigenous Kashmiris—the Hindus—to the inroads of the missionaries of an unknown faith from unknown lands. The locals were as ignorant of the characteristics of an alien faith brought by the missionaries as were the

[a] Lands beyond Amu Darya (Oxus River) given by the legendry Iranian king Feridun to his second son named Tur. See Shahnameh of Ferdowsi. The Greeks gave it the name of Trans-Oxiana and the Arab geographers called it Ma'vara-an-Nahr.

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missionaries about the features of the faith of Kashmiris. This is evident from the historical record of the latter half of the 14th century. Jonraja[b] gives somewhat muddled treatment to the far-reaching changes happening in Kashmirian society at that time in his history. After all, he was writing when Kashmir had passed into the hands of Muslim Sultans.

Roots

Scholars subscribing to the theory of the origin of Aryans in Central Asia believe that the ancient Kashmiris are the descendants of the Indo-Iranian race. They trace the origin of this story to the *Rig Veda*. Max Mueller strongly advocated the 'Aryan Invasion Theory'.[c]

However, some scholars are of the view that Kashmiris are the descendants of the Lost Tribe of Israelis exiled in 722 BC.[1] Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, who had visited Northern India in the 11/12th century, writes, "In past, permission to enter Kashmir was given only to the Jews,"[2]

First arrivals

No Farsi history of medieval Kashmir gives us any categorical information about when the Muslims arrived in Kashmir first. *Rajatarangini* makes mention of *Turushikas* in several places as the invading hordes and predators from the north (Turkistan), which included the present Xinjiang (Eastern

[b] Sanskrit poet and historian at the court of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin. He wrote Dvitya Rajatarangnii a continuation of Kalhana's history after he passed away. Jonraja died in CE 1459.

[c] German Indologist Max Muller popularized the Aryan Invasion theory (AIT) in 1853 CE. According to this theory Northern India was invaded and conquered by nomadic, light-skinned race of a people called 'Aryans' who supposedly descended from some unknown land around 1,500 BCE.
(https://www.google.com/search?q=Max+Muller+and+AIT&oq=Max+Muller+and+AIT&aqs=chrome).

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Turkistan) province of China. Two routes were known to them; one was through Shahidullah Pass in Eastern Ladakh, and the other was via Swadgir [d] in North Western Frontier Province. *Rajatarangini* also speaks of *Yavanas* and *Mlechhas.*[e] But it is not clear whether the *Turushikas* (Turks) of *Rajatarangini* are Muhammadans, Buddhists, Shamanists or pagans because all these faiths had followers in the Central Asian region at that point in time.

Some Farsi histories of Kashmir tell us that *Chach Nameh*, the history of the conquest of Sind by the Arabs in AD 712, has reference to the presence of Muhammadans in Kashmir. Also, some unsubstantiated stories are told about the Kashmirian King Lalitaditya's (*circa* 724-761 CE) troops confronting the Arab predators or pirates in Sind. For example, according to C.V. Vaidya[3] (1861–1938), Kalhana's account is corroborated by the 13th century text *Chach Nameh.* A letter in this text, addressed by Raja Dahir of Sind to Muhammad bin Qasim, records, "The King of Kashmir on whose royal threshold the other rulers of Hind had placed their heads, who sways the whole of Hind, even the countries of Makran and Turan, whose chains a great many noblemen and grandees have willingly placed on their knees and against whom no human being can stand". Abu Raihan al-Biruni, who had visited India in CE 1030, and had evinced interest in the traditions of the Kashmiri Hindu community, does not make any mention of the presence of Muhammadans in Kashmir. Nevertheless, describing the details of the aftermath of Mahmud Ghaznavi's victory over Tralochanpala of the Kabul Shahi ruling house around CE 1018, Stein writes:

"The detailed account that *Tarikh-i-Yamini* gives of the decisive battle agrees in some particulars regarding the position occupied by the occupying forces to

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[d] Some think it is actually Sawad-i-Kunar. Swat is the region in NWFP that touches on the Afghan Province of Kunar. Hence the area came to be called Sawad-i-Kunar. In Farsi Kunar and Gir are identically written.

[e] Turushkas are the Turks and the Yavanas are the missionaries/mendicants from Transoxiana and Iran. Mlechhas word was commonly used for foreign "barbarians of whatever race or colour".

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Kalhana's description. Mahmud won a victory in a Valley which led from the region of Jhelum towards Kashmir. Some chiefs are said to have made a submission to the Sultan (Mahmud) as a consequence of the victory. Also, the forcible conversion of Kashmiris to Islam is mentioned on occasion".[4]

Ethno-religious geography

We have said that Islam was brought to Kashmir by Muslim missionaries and not Arab warriors. Two characteristics of these missionaries deserve notice. First, they were the descendants of the Aryan ethnic stock and not the Semitic. Linguistically, culturally and ethnically, they were closer to the Kashmiris than the Arabs, the tenets of which faith they had undertaken to propagate in a region where the people were dismally ignorant of the new faith that was being imported. They were required to disseminate the message of a prophet and his religion, whose roots were embedded in Semitic and nomadic ethos.

Secondly, another cognizable civilizational difference was that the missionaries were the progeny of a not-too-distantly proselytized generation of Zoroastrians or fire-worshipers —a religion widely spread over the vast region of Iran and Turan prior to the advent of Islam. These missionaries were under the invisible compulsion of behaving more loyally than the king because of cultural/a-cultural background and ethos. A difference has to be made between the builders of an empire and the desolators of that empire.

The Kashmir-bound Muslim missionaries originated from the region called Tukhara (or Tukharistan) in Avestic geography. The ancient Khurasan (*Khur+aas+aan*), or "the land of the Rising Sun", viz. the eastern part of Iran, was detached from Tukhara when the Amu (Oxus) River came to be recognized as the watershed between Iran and Turan.

It is from this region (Tukhara and Khurasan) that most of the Muslim missionaries came to Kashmir to propagate the new faith and convert the indigenous idol-worshippers to it. Interestingly, Mir Sayyid Ali, whom

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Kashmiri Muslim historians call the founder of the Islamic faith in Kashmir, although originating from Hamadan in Western Iran, had spent a major part of his life in Tukhara (present-day Kulob in the Republic of Tajikistan) and remains buried in that town according to his will.

Thus, we find that Islam was brought to Kashmir by the descendants of the proselytized Zoroastrians, not the indigenous Arabs. A practice generally observed is that the proselytized missionaries are much more fanatical zealots than the original believers. Their wobbled psyche makes them seek recognition as true Muslims in comparison to an adherent of the indigenous faith. (The Iran-Arab rancor is also rooted in this psyche).

In the aftermath of the visit of the pioneering Islamic missionary Sayyid Ali Hamadani in CE 1371 (date variable), Sultan after Sultan of Kashmir opened the floodgates for the arrival of thousands of Islamic missionaries from Iran and Trans-Oxiana (beyond River Oxus, meaning Turan/Turkistan) over a period of time. They enjoyed the frugal royal patronage and warm hospitality of the proselytized community of Kashmiris.

Logjam and decadence

Somewhat less discussed, the fallout of this influx of alien hordes was the compulsion to create a new spiritual environment to match and, if possible, underrate the age-old Shaivite tradition. The Kashmir brand of Sufism[f] could not help give due recognition to the cosmopolitan views of the Shaivite, but at the same time, it avoided spirited rational debates because Hinduism does not recommend conversion. It has to be remembered that Laleshwari, the foremost among the Shaivites of her day, became popular with the proselytes not because of the force and depth of her philosophical aphorisms but because of her scathing criticism of the Brahminic orthodoxy of the day. By doing so, she

[f] The Sufism brought to Kashmir was used for propagation of Islamic faith rather than prompting the people for a higher spiritual life, of unity with the creator (*fana fi allah wa baqa biallah*).

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unwittingly lent support to popularizing the Kashmirian brand of Sufi mishmash. Nevertheless, the foreign Sufi missionaries in Kashmir must have wondered at the advanced level of universalism preached and practised by the Kashmir Shaivite fraternity that was reminiscent of Rumi's flight of imagination so close and so alike to Laleshwari's Shaivism[g].

Who does not agree with the critics of Brahminic orthodoxy at this period of Kashmir history? Laleshwari's aphorisms served as a stark warning of impending decadence. In his commendable work, A *History of Muslim Rule in Kashmir (1320-1819)*, Dr R. K. Parmu explains[5] how Laleshwari's poetry ripped society apart. "The people were generally made to believe in occultism, in magic, in stocks and stones, in springs, in rivers; in fact, in all the primitive forms of worship. The ascetic openly preached against this kind of worship. The stone in the temple, Laleshwari says, is no better than a millstone or the stone in a pavement," She said, "The idol is but a lump of stone and the temple a house of this lump".

But the Kashmiri Brahmin *Rishis,* steadfast to the *Trika* line of spirituality, welcomed Laleshwari's iconoclasm and tried to explore if Sufism could provide an acceptable alternative. They might have aspired to act something like a bridge connecting the quintessential truth underlying the ideals of *karmabumi* and the *maidan-i-amal.* The truth is that Kashmiris, even after the wholesale civilizational transformation, remained nostalgically glued to their traditions. Commenting on the hatred that the indigenous Kashmiris developed against the ex-pat Sayyids, A. Q. Rafiqi makes a cryptic comment: "So proud were they (Sayyid immigrants) of their descent that they are said to have passed

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[g] *Ney ney ham o bud kih mi amad o miraft – az bahr-e tafarruj*
Isa shud o bar gonbad-e dawwar bar amad – tasbih kunan shud
Nay nay kih ham o bud kih mi amad o mi raft--- har qarn kih deedi
Ta aqibat an shakl-e Arabwar dar amad--- dara-e jahan shud
Ney ney kih ham o bud kih mi goft analhaq --- dar soorat-i mansoor
Mansoor nabud an kih baran daar bar amad – nadaan be guman shud

Rumi

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derogatory remarks about Nuruddin (Nund Reshi). The main reason for such unbecoming behavior was their concern over the *Rishi*'s extreme ascetic habits under the influence of Hinduism".[6]

Missionaries unfold their agenda

We have said that the Il-Khanid era of the Central Asian-Iranian Mongol period witnessed the churning of the pot of major extant religions of the day. Christianity and Islam were gradually emerging as the main stakeholders and Buddhism was on the wane. Brahminism in Kashmir, though immediately outside the field of contest, was about to face the beginning of its decline. The trading routes like the fabulous Silk Road and its Kashmir arteries had come under severe strain and disruption owing to recurrent incursions of the Mongol and other northern hordes all across the Steppes. The earliest impact of the economic crunch was reflected in King Harsha ordering the breaking of the metallic idols in the idol houses of the Brahmins of Kashmir and converting the gold into currency.[7]

Demolition of Hindu temples and forced conversion of Hindus on a large scale and in a brutal manner happened during the reign of Sultan Sikandar, CE 1389-1413. Sayyid Muhammad, the youthful son of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani, had received education and training at the hands of obdurate Sunni scholars of the day. A great controversy raging among the broad sections of Muslim scholars and thinkers at that point in time was around the acceptance or rejection of the theory of "unity of being" (*wahdatu'l wujud*) propounded by the great Andalusian philosopher Ibnu'l Arabi. He believed that there is unity among all objects of creation. It was a thought opposed by the orthodox Iranian Islamists led by Alau'd Dowlah Semnani. Though Mir Sayyid Ali happened to be a pupil of Semnani, he differed with him in his criticism of Ibn'l Arabi.[8] Mir Sayyid defended Ibnu'l Arabi and even wrote a tract in his defense.

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But his son Sayyid Muhammad was taught and trained by the thinkers of the school of Alau'd Dowlah Simnani[h] , which rejected the theory of 'Unity of Being' thinking that it was the hangover of the teachings of Ibn Rushd (Averroes)[i] via *Vedanta* and *Upanishads* with which the Iranian Sufis of pristine order like Bayazid Bastami were familiar and influenced. Hence the theory was unacceptable to orthodox Muslims. Sayyid Ali and his disciples must have found it necessary to find an alternative compatible with the widespread Shaivite thought among the Hindu populace of Kashmir.

A question frequently asked is whether Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani had become skeptical about the success of his mission of conversion in Kashmir so much so that he left Kashmir in disgust. Perhaps he did not receive the expected quantum of support from Kashmir royalty. This made him lay down his ideas of how the Hindu community should be persecuted and victimized, which would serve as a booster to popularizing the Islamic faith in Kashmir. In his charter of persecution of the Hindus, we find that neither the demolition of existing temples nor the genocide of the infidels was recommended. But these two actions had become a priority with his son.

From well-researched studies of Iranian scholars on mysticism (*tasawwuf*), we understand that whatever Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani had left undone in the proselytizing exercise in Kashmir, was adequately accomplished by his son, Mir Muhammad—a fanatical Sunni. He had developed serious differences with his

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[h] He lived during the Il Khanid period (CE 1261-1336) and had entered the service of Arghun. But finding that the Buddhist monks from Tibet and Kashmir wielded great influence at the court of the Il Khans, he shifted to Sunni faction and then began writing against the philosophical theories of Ibnu'l Arabi. Sayyid Ali Hamadani was his pupil and had imbibed the teachings of liberal Sufism from him. Later on, Simnani became a rabid Sunni fanatic.

[i] Ibn Rushd (Averroes of European historians), born CE 1126 in Cordoba, Spain, is an outstanding Islamic philosopher of 12th century who integrated Islamic traditions with the ancient Greek thought. He produced commentaries on the works of Aristotle and Plato. *Tahafatu Tahafat* is his well-known work.

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father's pro-Shia tendency. The author of *Tohfatu'l Ahbab* makes a revealing comment:

> "After reaching adolescence, he (Sayyid Muhammad) did not accept the tutoring of Khwaja Ishaque for spiritual guidance. Wicked and satanic persons misled him into opposition to and animosity with that spiritualist (Khwaja Ishaque). Owing to these differences and quarrels, he went into self-imposed exile".[9]

What were the achievements of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani to which the authors of *Tohfatu'l Ahbab* and *Baharistan* and other Kashmiri Farsi historians allude? This has been summed up by Darakhshan Abdullah in a research thesis[10]. She writes:

"..... Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani (Shah Hamadan) entered Kashmir with 700 Sayyids and his son, Mir Muhammad Hamadani, with 300 more. They endured in the Valley under royal protection and disseminated the message of Islam. In his well-known work *Zakhiratu'l Muluk,* Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani (AD 1314-AD 1385) penned down instructions for the Muslim rulers on how to treat the Hindus (of Kashmir):

- Muslim rulers shall not allow fresh constructions of Hindu temples and shrines and image worship.
- No repair shall be executed to the existing Hindu temples and shrines.
- They shall not proffer Muslim names.
- They shall not ride a harnessed horse.
- They shall not move about with arms.
- They shall not wear rings with diamonds.
- They shall not deal in or eat bacon.
- They shall not exhibit idolatrous images.
- They shall not build houses in the neighbourhood of Muslims.

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- They shall not dispose of their dead in the neighbourhood of Muslim graveyards, nor weep or wail over their dead.
- They shall not deal in or buy Muslim slaves.
- No Muslim traveller shall be refused lodging in the Hindu temples and shrines where he shall be treated as a guest for three days by non-Muslims.
- No non-Muslim shall act as a spy in the Muslim state.
- No problem shall be created for those non-Muslims who, of their own will, show their readiness for Islam.
- Non-Muslims shall honour Muslims and shall leave their assembly whenever the Muslims enter the premises.
- The dress of non-Muslims shall be different from that of Muslims.

The 'Evil Force'

After giving up his official position at the court of Arghun, the Il Khani[j] ruler of Iran, 'Alau'd Dowleh Simnani, chose to come close to Sufism and Islamic orthodoxy. The Il Khanid era of Iranian history (from CE 1265 to the death of Ghazan in 1304) was a period of great religious commotion in the entire Mongol-dominated Asian region. All the major religions of the day, namely Buddhism, Nestorian Christianity, Islam (both factions), Shamanism and paganism, were trying to establish an upper hand in the Mongol realm. The adherents made strenuous efforts of each faith to become acceptable to the assembly (*kuraltai* in Mongolian language). No wonder, therefore, if, in the matter of faith, the Il-Khan rulers often found themselves on the horns of a dilemma and shifted between two or three faiths depending on the ground situation. For example, Ghazan, a descendent of Hulagu, was promised military assistance by one Amir Novroz—a Mongol Commander—only if he

[j] The descendants of Hulagu Khan, who established their rule over Iran after Hulagu's death in CE 1265, are called Il Khans. Arghun was the grandson of Hulagu.

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converted to Islam. And in this way, Ghazan became Iran's first Muslim Mongol ruler.

The urge to convert people to one or the other faith became a fashion or political expediency of the day. While to the west of the Mongol empire mainland, the Crusade States became active in bringing into their fold the scattered satraps, Islamists of the Novroz ilk looked for expansion of Muhammad's faith eastward. 'Alau'd Dowleh Semnani had discarded pro-Buddhist inclination acquired under the influence of Arghun Ashraf Jehangir Semnani, the scion of the Semnan ruling house, had renounced his royal status and turned a Sufi of Kubravi order and travelled to India. He enjoyed respect in the court of Tughlaq rulers of India. We learn that in his bid to mediate between Sultan Shahabad Din (the grandson of Sultan Shamsudin Shahmir) of Kashmir (CE 1354-1374), and Firuz Shah Tughlaq of Delhi (CE 1351–1388), over their territorial/border dispute, Sayyid Ali Hamadani happened to meet and know Jehangir Simnani. The presence of someone from the Delhi-based Simnani clan in Kashmir in later days has also been reported.

In the Hindus or the nascent converts, Mir Muhammad could discern the dormant yet potent traces of Brahminic predisposition that upheld the concept of 'Unity of Being' (actually drawn from Shaivite philosophy), and their idolatry as the perpetuation of all that his faith abhorred. This was unacceptable to him and, hence, the compulsion of massive enterprise of uprooting Hinduism and all its visible and invisible traces from Kashmir.

Though Mir Muhammad was of young age, the awe and respect in which the Sultan held him can be gauged from the following sentence drawn from Jonraja's *Rajatarangini*:

> "The King (Sultan Sikandar) waited on him (Sayyid Muhammad) daily as humble as a servant, and as a student, he daily took his lessons from him. He placed Muhammad before him and was attentive to him like a slave. As the wind destroys the trees and locusts the *shali* (paddy) crop,

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> so did the *Yavanas* destroy the usages of Kashmira. Attracted by the gifts and honors which the king bestowed and by his kindness, the *mlecchas* entered Kashmir even as the locusts enter a good field of corn". [11]

Sikandar's iconoclasm is well-known. He is accused of full-blooded persecution of the Hindus of Kashmir after the establishment of Muslim rule in CE 1339, but the entire issue needs to be revisited. We have reasons to discard the theory of bringing the onus of destruction of temples, *viharas, stupas* and *tirthas* (Hindu shrines) as well as the forced conversion of the Hindus entirely to the doorsteps of Sultan Sikandar. He was born to a Hindu mother named Subhatta,[12] and both of his wives came from prestigious Hindu houses, as indicated above. He gave his two daughters in marriage to the Hindus. A king with these connections cannot be on inimical terms with his Hindu subjects. Since the heinous crimes against the Kashmiri Hindus were committed at the behest of Muhammad Hamadani, Farsi historians of Kashmir brought the onus of the crime to the doorsteps of the Sultan and eulogized him as an upholder of a new faith. They have intentionally absolved Muhammad Hamadani of the charge of being the agent provocateur or the "Evil force" in the words of Muhibbu'l Hasan.[13] These historians would not want to tarnish the image of the one who they believed descended from the line of the Prophet through his Alavi connection.

Feudal structure

Evidently, he needed a freshly-converted powerful local feudal social structure to lend support to his ambitious mission of propagating the new faith of a foreign origin. The services of Suha Bhatta, Islamized as Malik Saifu'd Din by Muhammad Hamadani, to whom he had given his daughter in marriage, were used with maximum result.[14]

We also have reservations in accepting the story that Suha Bhatta, proselytized as Saifu'd Din, was maltreated by his co-religionists. Therefore, to seek revenge

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he opted for conversion. The death of the daughter of Suha Bhatta within a year of her marriage to Mir Muhammad is again a moot point. No Farsi historian of Kashmir tells us the cause of death and that gives rise to many speculations.

Suha Bhatta was one of the four prominent Hindu courtiers and senior officers of Sultan Sikandar. He enjoyed reasonably high status and for a man of his high social standing, finding a suitable life partner for his daughter was not difficult. Secondly, it appears that circumstantially he may have been subjected to great pressure to give his daughter in marriage to a person of different faith and socio-cultural background.

There are clear indications in *Baharistan* and also in the historical works of both Hasan Khuihami and Haider Malik Chadura that the destruction of temples was the foremost priority of Mir Muhammad. Note this meaningful sentence in *Baharistan*: "Immediately after his (Mir Muhammad's) arrival, Sultan Sikandar, peace be upon him, submitted to his religious supremacy and proved his loyalty to him by translating his words into deeds".[15] Two inferences can be drawn. One is that Sultan Sikandar submitted to the "religious supremacy" of Mir Muhammad and the second is that he had said the words that the Sultan translated into action. The questions are: (a) His father had not indulged in iconoclasm, but now that destiny had catapulted him into the seat of power, would he want to resume the mission lurking in his mind? and (b) what was/were the word(s) of Mir Muhammad that the Sultan would translate into action. In other words, the words came from one person and actions from another. This is why the onus of destruction of Hindu civilization essentially falls on Mir Muhammad and not Sultan Sikandar.

Turushkas

We have evidence to show that towards the late 11th and early 12th century, Kashmirian kings and greedy chieftains, impressed by the military prowess and

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activism of the *Turushkas*, engaged them as mercenaries to strengthen their private fighting forces. In the words of Stein, "King Harsha's (1089-1101 CE) iconoclasm should be taken as an indication of his leaning towards Muhammadanism".[16] Elucidating Kalhana's verse 885 of Book viii of *Rajatarangini*, Stein remarks: "the *Turushkas* here referred to are, of course, Muhammadans from the Punjab or the lower hills". It means that by the year 1120-21 CE, Muhammadans had established their sway over Punjab with fairly easy access to Kashmir. In other words, we may say that about two centuries prior to the advent of Shahmir (CE 1339) political and military management of the Hindu Kingdom of Kashmir had opened up to the inroads of the Muhammadans whether from the Trans-Badakhshan region or from the plains of Punjab. Therefore, one can say that early Muhammadans, in whatever guise—Sufis, missionaries, mendicants, musclemen, traders etc. were not arriving in a vacuum. "Islam made its way into Kashmir not by forcible conquest but by gradual conversion, for which the influx of foreign adventurers both from the south and Central Asia had prepared the ground," says A. Stein.[17] With the passage of time they became the props and pillars of Kashmir's feudal structure.

Beleaguered Rinchen

Therefore, the presence of a Suhrawardi Muslim dervish of Turkish[k] origin named Bulbul Qalandar/Shah in Kashmir around CE 1301 is not a surprise. Kashmiri historians shower profuse praise and blessings on him for being the first Musalman to plant his foot on Kashmir soil. But the story of conversion to Islam of Rinchen, the Tibetan intruder, is highly doubtful. Rinchen, like his countrymen, was a Buddhist by faith. Haidar Malik says that Rinchen was inclined to embrace the religion of the Brahmins.[18] Jonaraja says, "One Devaswami had scruples initiating Rinchen into the Shaivite faith. The refusal was made because Rinchen happened to be a Bhautta by birth".

[k] Kashmir medieval historians call an immigrant a Turk if he wields arms otherwise, he is a Sayyid from Iran or Turkistan.

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Wasn't the Hindu society of those days caste-ridden? How sad and thoughtless on the part of the Brahmins of the day to have refused the admission of Rinchen to the Hindu faith. The consequences of this blunder were disastrous.

The conversion of Rinchen to the Islamic faith and his marrying Kota, the daughter of the slain commander of Kashmirian forces, Ramachandra, put a seal on the long rule of Hindu Rajas over Kashmir. Rinchen's son from Kota Rani was given the name of Haider at the insistence of Shahmir. Ravanchandra,[19] the brother of Kota Rani, was the first among the Hindu royalty to be converted to the Islamic faith.

Sultan Shamsu'd Din Shahmir, a herdsman from Panchghabbar[20] (Rajouri-Budhal) region, had been made a commander by Kota Rani, the queen of Kashmir, to help restore law and order after the rapacity of Zulchu, a Turkic predator. After successfully curbing the defiant and lawless groups, he aspired to the throne of the Kashmir kingdom, which he accomplished by first murdering the co-commander Bikhshana Bhatta Kakpori, the foster brother of Kota Rani, and then treacherously arresting and deposing the Queen throwing to winds the favors he had received from her. At the royal palace in Andarkot (Abbhiyantarakota), the wretched Khashya thug installed himself as the first ruler of the Muslim Kingdom of Kashmir under the title of Sultan Shamsu'd Din Shahmir in CE 1341.

Flicker of light

Medieval Kashmir historians have showered lavish praises on Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (Bud Shah) (CE 1420 –1470) for his many works of public welfare. He was generous and tolerant. Indeed, he invited many artisans from Samarkand who introduced numerous trades and skills in Kashmir for the first time. He showed a keen interest in learning and patronized learned men, both Muslims and Hindus. He worked hard to bring peace and tranquility to Kashmir during his long reign of nearly half a century. Jonaraja and Muslim historians of Kashmir writing in Farsi have given Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin credit for being very

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liberal and sympathetic towards his Hindu subjects. He ordered the rebuilding of temples destroyed by the orders of Sikandar, the Iconoclast. Hindu festivals were revived, Hindu religious books were retrieved and the Hindus who had left Kashmir were recalled and resettled. He ordered the construction of an island in Wular Lake called Zaina Lank. Because of his liberal and secular views, the Hindus gave him the sobriquet of Bud Shah, meaning the Great King. They still call him by the same name.

However, his fanatical co-religionists, especially those adhering to the Shia faction, have denigrated him for meting out just and humane treatment to the Hindu population. The author of *Baharistan* writes:

> "The only conspicuous defects and overall drawbacks of Zainu'l Abidin were that idolatry and heresy, which had been stamped out in the reign of Sultan Sikandar the Iconoclast—God bless his soul—and of which there had remained no traces in the lands of Kashmir, were revived by him". [21]

The following excerpt from *Baharistan* gives an idea of the magnitude of destruction of Hindu civilization during the seventy-five years of the reign of the first six rulers of the Shahmiri dynasty (from Sultan Shams-ud-Din to the beginning of the reign of Zain-ul-Abidin):

> "All those temples and idol houses of the infidels, which had been destroyed totally in the reign of Sultan Sikandar, were rebuilt and rehabilitated by him. Most of the non-believers and polytheists who had fled to the lands of Jammu and Kishtwar because of the overwhelming strength of Islam were induced by him to return to Kashmir. The sacred books of the infidels and the writings of the polytheists which had been taken out of this country were brought back and thus the learning of the non-believers and customs of the polytheists were revived by him. He helped the community of misled idolaters to prosper. In every village and town, blasphemous customs

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connected with springs or temples were revived. He ordered that in each town and locality celebration of special feasts and festivals by the infidels be revived in accordance with the customs prevalent in the past. He himself attended many of these festivities and distributed gifts among dancers, stage actors, musicians and women singers so that all people, high and low, found they were happy and satisfied with him". [22]

This short paragraph from *Baharistan* also gives an insight into an aspect of the cultural life of the Hindu society of the day. Jonaraja tells us that Shri Bhatta, a renowned Hindu physician, cured the King of a dangerous carbuncle. "Responding to the offer of a reward, the wise and selfless Brahmin physician desired that the *jizya* (poll tax) imposed by Sultan Sikandar on the Brahmins be remitted and opportunities be assured to them to develop their mental and moral resources without any let or hindrance".

A locality in the neighborhood of Hawal in downtown Srinagar is called Shirbatun, which is the Kashmirian phrase meaning the 'locality of Shri Bhatta'.

Budshah undertook many works of public utility like the Zainagir canal, which brought water to the drylands of Zainagir. The region has been named after him. A number of localities like Zaingir, Zainpur, and Zaindab are among such enterprises. A large number of destroyed temples were reconstructed and their *agraharas* meaning 'endowment lands' restored.

Post-Budshah period

The period of Kashmir's history from the death of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin in CE 1473 to the conquest of Kashmir by the forces of the Mughal Emperor Jalalu'd Din Akbar in CE 1586, filling a total of 113 years, is a long and sordid story of recurrent rebellions of local chieftains known as Damaras, struggle for power and supremacy between the Baihaqi Sayyids and the Chak commanders, hate-games between the local stakeholders and the external intruders especially

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the Sayyids (*Saadat*) and feudal lords and deplorable rivalry among many claimants to the throne of Kashmir. Kashmir of this era presents a miserable picture of classical, medieval feudalism. The large community of immigrants pretending to be the repositories of Islamic religious and theological knowledge received villages as land grants for their maintenance. In due course of time, the second line of land-owning aristocracy came into being in Kashmir with strong clout in political administration.

During the entire Sultanate period of 247 years (CE1339 – 1586), the Sultans and their ruling apparatus in Kashmir appear to have focused attention on one and only one agenda for the state. It was of destroying all visible traces of Kashmir's ancient civilization, decimating the Hindu population through genocide or forced conversion and reducing their remnants to the status of a *dhimmi.*[23] The only exception to this generalization is a period of half a century of Bud Shah's reign. Except for this Sultan, no Kashmir ruler evinced any interest either in the development or in reforms to ameliorate the condition of the masses of people. People died of disease, hunger, floods, droughts, internal disruption and external intrusion. Not a single instance of relief to the beleaguered population in times of calamities can be found. Among the construction works, two items are conspicuous: destroying the temples and raising mosques at their ruins and, secondly, building mausoleums and tombs for the dead rulers or saints and Sufis of contentious credibility. In the city of Srinagar, the maximum number of mosques that we see today stand on the ruins of destroyed temples or *viharas.*

Ahraman[24] reborn

Two events in the post-Bud Shah history of Kashmir are notable. One is the Satanic missionary, a rabid fanatic Iranian, Shamsu'd Din Araki (CE 1477) by name, and a follower of Nurbakhshiyya (Shia) Sufi order (after its founder Nur Bakhsh in Iran) who has won the notoriety of being the most ruthless destroyer of Hindu civilization in Kashmir, the perpetrator of genocide and forced

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conversions of hundreds of thousands of Kashmiri Hindus to Nurbakhshiyya (Shia) order. Kashmiri Hindus call him by the name '*Shoonsheh tot*'[l] and think that he was the Zoroastrian mythological devil 'Ahriman' reborn. We here reproduce from *Baharistan* only one sentence of his devilish acts:

> "But with the support and authority of Malik Musa Raina, Amir Shamsu'd-Din Muhammad Araki undertook wholesale destruction of all those idol houses as well as the total ruination of the very foundation of infidelity and disbelief. On the site of every idol house he destroyed, he ordered the construction of a mosque for offering prayers in an Islamic manner. The idolatry and heresy which had existed prior to his coming to this place were effectively replaced by his preaching and propagation of Islamic laws and practices".

About the genocide, the same chronicle records:

> "One of the big tasks completed by him (Kaji Chak)[m] and one of the major commands of Amir Shamsu'd-Din Muhammad Araki carried out by him was the massacre of infidels and polytheists of this land. It happened like this. Their massacre was scheduled for the days of the approaching *'Ashura* (ten days of mourning in Shia tradition). Thus, in the year A.H. 924 (CE 1518), corresponding to the 94th year of the Kashmiri calendar, during the '*Ashura*, about seven to eight hundred infidels were put to death. Those killed were the leading personalities of the community of infidels at that time: men of substance and government functionaries. Each of them wielded influence and sway over a hundred families of other infidels and heretics. Thus, the entire

[l] Shoonsh appears to be the Kashmiri phonetic corruption of Shams and tot in Kashmiri is a sturdy mule a beast of burden. Shamsu'd Din Araki was of strong physical built, ruthless and behave more like a beast than human..

[m] Kaji Chak (Kanchan Chakra) was perhaps the most powerful chieftain of the clan of Chaks who played a very important role during the medieval period of Kashmir. Kaji Chak, converted by Araki to Nurbakhshiyya order was the prime minister and commander-in-chief of Kashmir.

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community of infidels and polytheists in Kashmir was coerced into conversion to Islam at the point of the sword. This is one of the major achievements of Malik Kaji Chak". [25]

Factional strife

The second notable event of the period under discussion is the incursion of a warlord of Eastern Turkistan named Mirza Haidar Dughlat in the year CE 1532. The significance of this event is that Dughlat was a staunch Sunni, as were his Chagatai/Uyghur[n] troops. In Kashmir, he found that the Shia Nurbakhshiyya missionary Shamsu'd Din Araki had converted all Hindus to his faith and the local commanders and grandees, one and all, adhered to the tenets of that faction. He undertook the stupendous mission of replacing the Shia with the Sunni faith and reviving the Sunni traditions. In the Shia-Sunni factional feud, large-scale massacres of the Shia took place, forcing their remnants to live a quiescent life for fear of persecution. The Shias in Kashmir lost ascendency until the advent of the Chaks[26] in CE 1551, the year in which Daulat Chak assumed the reins of administration. After bloody factional battles, Shamsu'd Din Araki was murdered, and his dead body was deposited somewhere not known to the public.

From Chaks to Mughals

However, the Chaks (abbreviation of Sanskrit Chakra), originally hailing from the Drav region in Northern Kashmir, had adopted the Shia faith after converting to Islam. Their ancestor Lankar Chak (Alamkar Chakra) was perhaps the first to get converted to the Shia faith. They played a significant

[n] Mirza Haider Dughlat was himself an Uyghur and related to Babur. The fact is that the Mughals were Uyghurs of Eastern Turkestan and they spoke Chagatai. Babur and his descendants spoke Chagatai. Even the biography of Babur called *Tuzak-i-Babri* was originally written in Chagatai and not Farsi. It would be right to call the Mughals as Uyghur.

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role in the political affairs of Kashmir during the post-Bud Shah period. One of their powerful warlords, Kaji Chak (Sanskrit Kanchan Chakra), rose to prime minister. A staunch pro-Nurbakhshiyya adherent and a committed disciple of fanatical Araki, he undertook the genocide of thousands of Hindus. Kashmir history has not seen an era of greater chaos, disorder and lawlessness than that of the Chaks.

After the arrest of Yusuf Shah Chak, the last of the independent (Chak) rulers of Kashmir in CE 1586 by the Mughal forces, and integration of Kashmir as a *suba* (province) of the Mughal Empire, Kashmir found a comparatively peaceful era under Akbar and Jahangir. Earlier, a delegation of Kashmiri Sunni elders led by Maulana Ya'qub Sarfi had made an appearance at the court of Emperor Akbar and appealed to him to annex Kashmir and put an end to the rule of the Shia (Chak) rulers. The Shia–Sunni feud had prompted Kaji Chak to seek the support of Sher Shah Suri in Patna and his adversary making a similar request to Emperor Homayun (Humayun) in Lahore. Mirza Haider Dughlat ruled Kashmir on behalf of Humayun from 1541 to 1551 CE. In 1589, Kashmir became a province of the Mughal Empire and was ruled through a governor, known as Subedar. Under Akbar and Jahangir Padishah, the Hindus of Kashmir saw a respite in their persecution. Akbar himself visited the Valley thrice and Jahangir six times. Raja Birbal, the Revenue Minister of Akbar, undertook the first phase of land settlement. Administrative machinery was partially renovated. Akbar built the rampart of the fort on Hari Parbat hillock, which provided employment to hundreds of Kashmiris. Several roads, bridges and caravan-serais were built. A very large number of gardens were built in Kashmir by the governors of the Mughal emperors. Well-known among these are the Shalimar Bagh, Nishat Bagh, and Chashma Shahi, built between 1620 and 1634 CE. The water of Chashma Shahi is known for its rejuvenating qualities. Farsi literature was introduced widely in Kashmir.

During Aurangzeb's rule of 49 years, Kashmir saw 14 Governors. One of them, Iftikar Khan (1671 to 1675 CE) is notorious for his persecution of Kashmiri

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Pandits, who approached the ninth Sikh Guru, Teg Bahadur, for a reprieve from the atrocities.

From the beginning of the Mughal rule over Kashmir till the deposition of Bahadur Shah Zafar in 1857, the last Mughal ruler of India, which fills a period of 270 years (CE 1586 to 1857), Kashmir passed through three phases of autocratic rule viz. the Mughals, Pathans and Sikhs. By and large, this period of Kashmir's history has witnessed less turmoil and disorder in comparison to earlier centuries. But Kashmiri Hindus were again faced with persecution by the Governors of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb (CE 1628–1707). Scores of Kashmiri Hindu families migrated to the Indian plains during these 79 years because of repression. Even *jizya* was imposed on the Hindus during Aurangzeb's reign.

In subsequent years, not only was Kashmir's administration totally mismanaged and chaotic, a terrible famine followed a devastating flood in 1746. As a result, about three-fourths of Kashmir's population perished. Under these conditions, two influential local leaders invited the ruler of Afghanistan, Ahmad Shah Abdali, to invade Kashmir. Thus started what is often referred as the darkest period of Kashmir's history.

The Afghan rule over Kashmir is a sordid story of tyranny and persecution. Rauf Ahmad Mir has summed it up aptly in his article 'Kabul's Kashmir Misrule' in *Kashmir Life* of 16 September 2021. He writes:

> "The entire period of Afghan rule (CE 1753-1819) in Kashmir can be characterized as an unending conflict between Afghan state and regional forces, declaration of sovereign status even by Afghan governors against their own masters, intermittent attempts of loot and arson by local chieftains, particularly by Bombas, Khakhas and Gujjars of Poonch, periodical sectarian clashes, mostly between Shias and Sunnis, recurring causation of natural calamities like floods, famines,

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earthquakes and the pathetic tale of misgovernance and acute exploitation of Afghan officialdom".

Historians have given horrendous stories of Afghan tyranny on the people of Kashmir, especially the womenfolk. The Hindus would disfigure their young women or mutilate their bodies to escape rape and kidnapping at the hands of barbaric Afghans. Birbal Kachru in *Tawarikh-i-Kashmir* and Anand Kaul in his *Kashmiri Pandits* give the details of atrocities committed by the Afghans during their rule over Kashmir.

A Kashmiri Pandit, Birbal Dhar, fed up with the atrocities of the Afghan Governor Jabbar Khan and at great risk to his family, approached Maharaja Ranjit Singh for help. After two unsuccessful attempts, Ranjit Singh's forces, under the command of Dewan Chand, defeated Jabbar Khan in 1819 and established Sikh rule over Kashmir.

In 1846, Maharaja Gulab Singh, a commander of the Sikh army, raised the modern State of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and laid the foundation of the Dogra ruling dynasty. The northern areas like Gilgit, Baltistan, Ladakh, Hunza, Nagar, Chitral etc., were conquered and annexed by the Dogra warriors to the Kingdom. J&K continued to be among the princely states of British India till India won freedom on 15 August 1947.

In October 1947, the Government of India, headed by Jawahar Lal Nehru, a member of the Kashmiri Hindu community, snatched the one-century-old kingdom of the Dogras and handed it over to a wily autocrat posing as a secularist but actually drawing political strength from mosque-attending demagogues and street-roaming musclemen.

The great betrayal

The arbitrary and capricious manner in which Sheikh Abdullah started functioning as the Chief Administrator and later on Prime Minister of the

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State had convinced the Kashmir Hindu minority that its days of freedom were over and its return journey from freedom to slavery had begun in a new and unprecedented manner. Nobody could predict how long their ongoing spate of slavery would last.

Within just five years of the Sheikh's ascension to power in 1947, Nehru-Abdullah's bonhomie began to show cracks. The Sheikh started to speak out his true mind. In the spring of 1950, he had a secret meeting with the American Ambassador Loy Henderson. They talked about Kashmir's independence.[27] Henderson's wife, on vacation in Srinagar, tried to maintain the tempo of the talks. The inside story of the Sheikh's secret meetings with the next American Ambassador, Adlai Stevenson, was stunning.[28] In an interview with the correspondent of *The Scotsman*, the Sheikh, responding to the option of independent Kashmir, had said, "...Yes, independence ... guaranteed by the UN ... may be the only solution".[29] In a public rally in Ranbir Singh Pora (Jammu), he reiterated his resolve to withdraw accession to the Indian Union and declare J&K an independent state.

On 15 February 1954, the members of the State Constituent Assembly who were present cast a unanimous vote ratifying the state's accession to India. In his address to the Constituent Assembly, the then Premier, Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad, said, "We are today taking the decision of final and irrevocable accession to India and no power on earth can change it".[30] In 1956 the Constituent Assembly finalized its constitution. Section 3 said, "The State of J&K is and shall remain an integral part of the Union of India". In passing, we reproduce the crucial comment of Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad made in August 1953. He said, "An independent State (of J&K) under the patronage of the US would be a threat to the freedom and independence of the Indian and Pakistani people".[31] The Bakshi was referring to something which the then Indian government was hiding but which had blown like a bombshell later on. And the same Bakshi was *Kamarajed* (coaxed to resign under the 'Kamaraj Plan') by Nehru in 1962. The Pandits have wondered how Nehru wanted to

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demolish the secularist structure in Kashmir, which the Bakshi tried to protect desperately.

The inclusion of the humiliating Article 35-A in the Indian Constitution was the manipulation of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who had developed emotional and big-brother camaraderie with the Sheikh. What an irony that he could not dispel the Sheikh's looming shadow even after putting him behind bars for more than a decade—1953 to 1964.

Nationalist elements in and outside J&K wondered if Prime Minister Nehru's conscience met with a shock at his friend's betrayal. So blind had he become in his fondness for the Sheikh that he left the dismissal and arrest of the Sheikh to the care of the officiating Prime Minister, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai when he went on a visit to London.

Made in the Lutyens

The man who would reverse the subtle communal and parochial predisposition of the Sheikh regime was axed under the Kamraj plan a decade later to be ousted in an ignominious manner that not only his adversaries in Kashmir but even the thankless cliques in the corridors of power in New Delhi abandoned him to oblivion. Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad, the only true nationalist and secular Muslim leader of Kashmir in her history of seven decades after freedom, was refused burial by the then rulers in Srinagar. The grateful Dogras of Jammu, whom he had liberated from the tyrannical and despotic rule of the Sheikh, had offered to provide a respectable burial place for Bakshi's dead body. Today, nobody takes the name of Bakshi in Kashmir, nor does anybody know where he lies buried despite the truth that Bakhshi is the real maker of modern Kashmir°.

° I am reminded of an anecdote told by late Maulana Masudi, the General Secretary of NC. He said that when it was known that the Sheikh would return to his second stint to power in 1975, he sent me a message through a common friend suggesting that I give my consent to join his new cabinet. I told the messenger to tell Sheikh Sahib that it would be

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In 1975, the Sheikh said he had wasted twenty years of his life aimlessly. He was referring to the loss of power in 1953. Misled by the advice of her pseudo-Chanakyan coterie, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi illegally and unconstitutionally catapulted the intractable Sheikh back into the seat of power in 1975. The good task that the Sheikh did during the seven years of his second stint in power was to establish links with Pakistan and ISI via the Riyadh highway. Along with drones of *Tableeghi Jamaatis* camouflaged as "God's Servants", sleuths of ISI and *al-Akhbarat*, tons of propaganda material and swaths of US dollars flowed into Kashmir. The ground for the Islamization of Kashmir during the modern era was laid out, and it was bound to culminate in the emergence of a theocratic state within a secular Indian Union. That is precisely what the Adhikari Thesis propagators were drilling into the head of the ruling Congress.

Towards Theo-fascism

Pakistan failed to grab Kashmir not only in 1947-48 but also in three subsequent wars with India, the third of which resulted in the break-up of Pakistan into two and the creation of Bangladesh. However, Pakistan changed its traditional strategy of fighting an enemy in the open and shifted to the new strategy of subversion and proxy war by utilizing the services of the jihadist outfits entrusted to the care of the Pak army and its intelligence wing. This process reached its culmination in 1990. By that time, all prerequisites of armed insurgency and anti-India mass movement were completed. Complete secrecy was maintained. Thousands of Kashmiri Muslim youth were provided facilities to go across the ~~LoC~~ line of control clandestinely, join the terrorist camps in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Pakistan, obtain training and

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my pleasure to serve the nation again together with Sheikh Sahib. But I would suggest that before taking the oath of office, we jointly (Sheikh Sahib and myself) visit the grave of Bakhshi Ghulam Muhammad, offer a fateha and beg for pardon saying "Bakhshi Sahib forgive us; we shall be doing the same what you did in 1953". The Sheikh never responded.

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brainwashing and return to Kashmir to let loose engines of mayhem, bloodshed and disruption. The bureaucracy, political structure, civil society, various services, police and intelligence outfits—all were roped into the widespread terrorist and anarchist activities. The Pandits were made special and selective targets to be gunned down in their homes, on streets, in marketplaces, offices or buses. Threats to life and honor were broadcast from loudspeakers atop the mosques and the vernacular press warned them to run for life, leaving their women behind. The atmosphere of the Islamic wars of the initial days was recreated. By the end of March 1990, 95 per cent of surviving Kashmiri Hindus were forced to abandon their homes and hearths and go into exile to unknown places and among unknown people.

Pakistan's Kargil aggression (1998-99) unfolded a new dimension of her nefarious designs in the region. Ambitious to be recognized as a regional power, it confirmed that even the possession of Kashmir, if that happened, was neither the only nor the final goal she had set for herself. The emergence of Theo-fascist forces in Pakistan, and their social and political reach is a new phenomenon India would have to reckon with. These forces have ideologically integrated with their counterparts in the Islamic world and also with the strong Pakistani and Kashmiri Muslim diaspora in the West.

A major catalyst in the Quranic ruling is the ultimate dominance of Islam over other faiths and the superiority of Islamic civilization over all other civilizations. The youth in Muslim seminaries all over the world are brought up along this scriptural guideline. The concept, they assert, must be translated into practice. Hence, we find general mobilization of the faithful. Pakistan, after effecting ethno-religious cleansing in Kashmir, has been making deep inroads into Kashmiri Muslim polity through subversion, bribes and Islamization agenda.

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[1] Theory of Kashmiri descent from Lost Tribe of Israel https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory_of_Kashmiri_descent_from_lost_tribes_of_Israel

[2] See al-Biruni's India tr. Sachau. In his work *Dabistanu'l Mazahib, tr. Shea and Troyer.* Mohsin Fani also reports the presence of many Jews in Kashmir during the 17th century. See http://thekashmiria.blogsp Turushkas are the Turks and the Yavanas are the missionaries/mendicants from Transoxiana and Iran..

[3] C. V. Vaidya, *History of Medieval Hindu India*, 3 vols, Pune, vol II, p. 13.

[4] *Rajatarangini*, tr. A Stein, Bk vii, fn verse 47-69.

[5] Journals Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies,Volume 33 Issue 3, Review: *A history of Muslim rule in Kashmir*, 1320–1819 by R. K. Parmu

[6] https://kashmirlife.net/converting-kashmir-issue-10-vol-11-211342/. In the opinion of this writer, the Sufi/Rishi credentials of Nund Rishi are a matter of serious controversy.

[7] See *Rajatarangni*, tr. A Stein. vol. ii, verse 1095.

[8] Mohiu'd Din Ibnu'l Arabi ((1165 -1240) was an Arab Andalusian Muslim scholar, mystic, poet, and philosopher, extremely influential within Islamic thought. Out of the 850 works attributed to him, some 700 are authentic while over 400 are still extant. *Fususu'l Hikam* is his monumental work on Islamic mysticism in which he gave the theory of wahdatu'l wujud or the Unity of Being. He is renowned among practitioners of Sufism by the names al-Shaykh al-Akbar ("the Greatest Shaykh"). See *Fusus ul Hikam*, Reynolds A Nicholson, Studies in Islamic Mysticism.

[9] *Tohfatu'l-Ahbab* (A Muslim Missionary in Medieval Kashmir) tr. Kashi Pandit, Aditya Prakashan, New Delhi 2009, p137. Curiously, the author of *Tohfatu'l Ahbab* says that after Sayyid Muhammad arrived in Kashmir, he chose to reside in a hospice built by Shaykh Bahau'd Din. It is intriguing if Bahau'd Din was a devout Sunni how come Shamsu'd Din Araki, a rabid Shia of Nurbakhshiyya order rebuilt the grave of Bahau'd Din and also criticised Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin for atrocious treatment of Shaykh Bahau'd Din. This calls for further investigation into the faith and ideology of Bahau'd Din who even today enjoys the respect of Kashmiri Sunni population. See Tofat, p 136, fn 1.

[10] '*Religious Policy of the Sultans of Kashmir* 1320 to 1586 AD. Mpoint.com: http://www.mpositive.in/contact-us/

[11] See *Rajatarangini* by Jonraja tr J C Dutt St 574.

[12] Jonaraja, Ibid, p. 92.

[13] *Kashmir under the Sultans*, Muhibbu'l Hasan.

[14] *Ten Studies in Kashmir History and Politics*, Kashi Pandit, Academic Foundation, New Delhi, 2019, p. 183.

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[15] *Baharistan*, Loc cit, p 42.

[16] *Rajatarangini*, Bk vii, v 195fn.

[17] *Rajatarangini*, vol I, Introduction, ch. V. P130.

[18] *Tarikh-i Malik Haider* Chadura, MS, fol. 31a

[19] "A descendant of the house of Raja Sushram Chand of Nagarkot. Before embracing Islam, he held a debate with Baba Bulbul", writes Malik Haidar, *Tarikh-i-Malik Haider*, MS. Folio 32b.

[20] See *Rajatarangini*, vol. i, 370 n. Stein says that in numerous passages of Rajat, we find the rulers of Rajpuri, the modern Rajouri, described as "lords of Khashas. Rajat Bk vii verse 979 et al. For Panchghabbar see Rajatarangini vol i, Bk 1, fn 317. Kashmir historians glorify him as a descendant from the line of Pandavas for which there is no evidence.

[21] *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, op cit, pp 80-81.

[22] Ibid pp 69-70.

[23] Pronounced as Zimmi. "A protected person", referring to the state's obligation under sharia to protect the individual's life, property, as well as freedom of religion, in exchange for loyalty to the state and payment of the jizya (poll tax), See *Loghat Nameh Dehkhda*, Farsi Encyclopaedia.

[24] Ahraman is the evil spirit spoken about in the history of pre-Islamic Iran meaning Zoroastrianism, and defined as the, Lord of Darkness and Chaos, and the source of human confusion, disappointment, and strife. We mean Shamsu'd Din Araki. For the life and achievements of Araki see *Tohfatu'l Ahbab* tr A Muslim Missionary in Medieval Kashmir, Kashi Pandit, Aditya Prakashan, 2/18 Ansari Rd, New Delhi, Second Edition 2022.

[25] Ibid, p. 122. For fuller details of the process of forced conversions see *Tohfatul Ahbab: A Muslim Missionary in Medieval Kashmir*, tr, Kashinath Pandit, Chapter IV.

[26] Lankar Chak (Alamkar Chakra), the forebear of Chaks abandoned the lands of Dardu and moved to Drav because of a family feud. He then migrated to Kashmir with his wife and children and settled in the village of Trehgam. *Baharistan*, Ibid, p. 16. For Dardu and Drav see *Rajatarangini*, vol. ii, p, 282 and vol. i, p. 93 et al.

[27] *'America's Great Fishing Expedition'* by Sandeep Bamzai in Observer Research Foundation, 16 August 2016.

[28] "Abdullah broached the idea of an independent Kashmir in 1950 with Loy Henderson, then the U.S. ambassador to India. In 1953, he had extensive discussions with Adlai Stevenson, a heavyweight Democrat who was visiting Kashmir. The content of these conversations was not disclosed, but Indians assumed that independence was the subject. A Bombay journal (The Current of August 26, 1953) known to be sympathetic to America reported that Stevenson had assured Abdullah of more than moral support. A loan of $15 million could be available if Kashmir became sovereign; besides "the Valley would have a

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permanent population of at least 5,000 American families," houseboats and hotels would be filled to capacity, Americans would buy the crafts output of dexterous Kashmiri artisans, and within three years every village in Kashmir would be electrified, "and so on and so forth". Sarvepalli Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Volume II (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979), p.131, n. 65. Rumour had it that Abdullah would declare independence on August 21, 1953— the day of the great Eid Festival, following which he would seek the protection of the United Nations against "Indian aggression". New Delhi took this seriously enough to move pre-emptively. On August 8, Abdullah was deposed as prime minister and jailed. World Policy Journal, vol. 21, issue 3 'Opening a Window in Kashmir' by Ramachandran Guha, p.81, Sage Pub Inc.

[29] Interviewed by Michael Davidson, *The Scotsman*, 14 April, 1949; also reproduced by H.L. Saxena in The Tragedy of Kashmir, 1975.

[30] *The Hindu*, Feb 17, 1954.

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Chapter 5

THE DOGRA RAJ: 1846-1947

Tej K. Tikoo

Historically, Dogras inhabited some smaller principalities in the southeast hilly region of Jammu, having migrated there from the deserts of Rajputana (present-day Rajasthan). Tracing their history to the lineage of *Ikshavaku* (solar dynasty) of Bhagwan Ram, they call themselves Raghuvanshi Rajputs. Dogras displayed extraordinary fighting qualities and were constantly at war with the other principalities of the region. According to some sources, the recorded history of their rulers dates back to 850 CE, when Rai Suraj Dev ruled some parts of Jammu.

After the collapse of the Mughal Empire, Raja Ranjit Deo (1742-1780), consolidated his territory by bringing 22 smaller Dogra chieftains under his control. With the rise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839), the Dogra dynasty got sucked into the rising Sikh Empire. However, the quick dissolution of the Sikh Empire (1801-1839) after the demise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh paved the way for their ascendancy once again.

Gulab Singh: 1792- 1858

The Dogra Dynasty's establishment in the middle of 19th century is intimately connected with the rise of Gulab Singh, who was born on 21 October 1792 into a Dogra Rajput family at Anderwah near Samba. The family traced its roots "to the Kachwaha clan who once ruled Jaipur".[1]

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Gulab Singh first came into the limelight at the age of sixteen, when he distinguished himself while fighting for the Dogras under Raja Jeet Singh against the Sikh Army. This battle for Jammu took place on the southern bank of River Tawi in 1808. Jeet Singh lost the crucial battle and, consequently, accepted Ranjit Singh's supremacy. Despite being on the losing side, Gulab Singh's valor attracted the attention of Ranjit Singh, who instructed Mian Mota Singh, the administrator of Jammu and elder brother of Gulab Singh's grandfather, to send Gulab Singh in his service. Impressed by the young man's fighting skills, Ranjit Singh quickly enlisted him in his Army while also employing his brothers, Dhyan Singh and Suchet Singh, in the Sikh *Durbar* (court of a ruler). Soon thereafter, Gulab Singh distinguished himself as an astute strategist and a gallant soldier when Ranjit Singh was still expanding and consolidating his empire.

When Jammu passed into the hands of Ranjit Singh, it was in turmoil due to infighting and the insurrection launched by Mian Dido, a local chieftain. Therefore, Ranjit Singh dispatched Gulab Singh to Jammu to put down the rebellion. After much struggle, Gulab Singh succeeded in putting down the insurrection. He played a significant role in Ranjit Singh's campaigns which helped the latter to expand his empire from Pamirs to Sindh and from Peshawar to Sutlej, including Kashmir. The Maharaja recognized Gulab Singh's rich contribution and conferred on him many honors, including the grant of *Jagirs* (feudal land grant) and letting Gulab Singh raise his own 200-horse cavalry.

In the siege of Multan, conducted by Ranjit Singh personally, Gulab Singh showed exceptional initiative and courage while retrieving the body of Ranjit Singh's much-loved comrade, despite facing the enemy's relentless barrage of canons. Later, Gulab Singh achieved great success in the attack on *Quila* (fort) Attock and during a difficult expedition against the Yusufzai Tribe in 1819, which enabled Ranjit Singh to acquire Peshawar. Thereafter, Gulab Singh, with his usual boldness and strategic foresight, succeeded in annexing Rajouri

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and defeating its ruler Agar Khan, who had been instrumental in Ranjit Singh's disastrous campaign against Kashmir in 1813.

Recognizing Gulab Singh's immense contribution to the Sikh State, Ranjit Singh personally installed him as the Raja of Jammu at Akhnoor Fort on 16 June 1822, when Gulab Singh was only 30 years old. In due course, Raja Gulab Singh became the most powerful person in the Lahore *Durbar*, second only to the Maharaja himself. Dhyan Singh and Suchet Singh, too, gained in stature.

In 1826, Ranjit Singh summoned Gulab Singh back to Lahore to suppress the rebellion of Azam Khan on the Frontier. Gulab Singh displayed enormous courage and strategic acumen during the campaign, which also involved Hari Singh Nalwa, another outstanding general of Ranjit Singh. What impressed the Maharaja most was the fact that Gulab Singh achieved this victory despite his forces being numerically far lesser than that of his opponent.

Between 1827 and 1837, Gulab Singh repeatedly distinguished himself in arduous campaigns that helped Ranjit Singh acquire the sobriquet of *Sher-e-Punjab* (Lion-of-Punjab). By the time Ranjit Singh died in June 1839, Gulab Singh had completely entrenched himself in the Sikh Kingdom as the most powerful feudatory of the Lahore *Durbar*.

Gulab Singh, in the meanwhile, brought Reasi, Kishtwar, Rajouri, Chenani, Bhaderwah, Chilas, Poinal, Yasin, Dard, Hunza, Ishkoman and other smaller areas under his control through armed campaigns, diplomatic skill, threats and subterfuge. Later, in 1838, his most brilliant commander, General Zorawar Singh, brought Ladakh province into his dominion through an extremely arduous expedition. Gilgit was thereafter conquered, thus bringing the whole of northern areas under his rule.

After Ranjit Singh's death, the Sikh State turned into a hotbed of intrigue, bloodshed and anarchy. Kharak Singh, who had succeeded Ranjit Singh,

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proved to be an unworthy heir to the 'Lion-of-Punjab'. Gulab Singh, too, became a victim of this fratricidal violence when he lost his elder son, Udham Singh.

Maharaja Gulab Singh

After Kharak Singh's death in 1840, his widow Mai Chand Kaur, and Sher Singh, son of Ranjit Singh, emerged as the contenders to the throne. "Gulab Singh left for Jammu along with the accumulated treasures of Ranjit Singh consisting of 16 carts filled with rupees and silver coins and 500 horsemen, each carrying a bag of *Mohurs* (a gold coin)".[2]

Realizing Gulab Singh's power and influence, the British now sought his help in their campaign against the Afghans to recapture Kabul. Through his diplomacy and farsightedness, Gulab Singh ensured that the Sikhs stayed neutral in this campaign, which ensured the British success in entering the Khyber Pass.

In September 1843, court intrigues and a scramble for power saw violence engulf the Lahore *Durbar*. As a result, Sher Singh and his son Partab Singh and

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Gulab Singh's both brothers, Suchet Singh and Dhyan Singh, and his two sons, Udham Singh and Sohan Singh, besides his nephew Hira Singh were killed. The British, who were watching the situation closely, now felt that the opportune time had come for them to strike at the feuding Sikh Empire that was anyway heading towards dissolution. The Dogras, Sikhs and the British, the three protagonists of this unfolding drama, had their own objectives/compulsions as also their strengths and weaknesses, which impacted the outcome of the impending war.

With considerable help from Muslims, the British finally confronted the Sikhs, resulting in a series of Anglo-Sikh wars. The most decisive battle was fought at village Sobraon, on the banks of River Sutlej, on 10 February 1846. Though the Sikhs fought with undaunted valor, they were finally defeated, leading to their empire virtually disappearing. Consequently, two treaties were signed; the first, the Treaty of Lahore, was signed on 9 March 1846. Under this treaty, Sikhs were required to relinquish the Jalandhar Doab and both banks of the Sutlej River and further pay an indemnity of 1.5 crore (15 million) rupees, failing which they would have to cede additional areas to the British. Gulab Singh, sensing an opportunity in view of the vanishing Sikh Empire, saw the benefits of making peace with the British. He, therefore, came forward to pay rupees 75 lakhs (7.5 million) on behalf of the Sikhs out of the above amount. This led to the signing of the Treaty of Amritsar on 16 March 1846, by virtue of which the British Government transferred 'ever independent possession' of some of the ceded areas to Gulab Singh in return for the above amount. These areas included the hilly tracts falling between east of the Indus and west of Ravi rivers and Kashmir.

However, Lal Singh, the Prime Minister in Lahore, instigated his Governor in Kashmir, Imam-ud-Din, not to pass the control of Kashmir to the Dogra Raja. Consequently, Gulab Singh sent his troops under Hukum Singh to Kashmir. A fierce battle ensued at Maisuma between the Dogra forces and Imam's forces led by Mirza Faqirullah, in which Gulab Singh's most trusted *Wazir*, Lakhpat, along with some officers, was killed. The British Governor General, seeing that

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Imam-ud-Din was becoming a stumbling block in the implementation of the Treaty, sent his forces to assist Gulab Singh. Sensing that the British meant business, Imam-ud-Din gave up and thus Kashmir passed into the hands of Gulab Singh. However, the Sikh and Dogra connection to Kashmir pre-dated the Treaty of Amritsar and events thereafter. Francis Younghusband writes in his book, *Kashmir:*

> "Raja Gulab Singh is already mentioned as accompanying Ranjit Singh's troops on their victorious march to Kashmir in 1819. On the death of Ranjit Singh, there was much violence among the Sikh soldiers and the Governor of Kashmir was surrounded by them. Therefore, about 5,000 men, nominally under the command of Sher Singh, Ranjit Singh's successor, were sent to Kashmir to restore authority. This was the year 1841, when the British were still behind the Sutlej, but were engaged in the fruitless and disastrous expedition to Kabul, which resulted in the murder of the envoy. Gulab Singh quelled the mutiny in Kashmir, placed a Governor of his own and from that day became a virtual master of the Valley, though, till 1846, it nominally belonged to Sikh rulers at Lahore".[3]

Before the end of 1847, Gulab Singh gave up the Hazara Province to Lahore in exchange for Bhimber and a strip of plain territory between Ranbir Singh Pura and Suchetgarh. He also exchanged Chambal territory lying to the west of the Ravi River with Lakhanpur. These exchanges formalized through a treaty, gave final shape to the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

In 1852, the British forced an Officer on Special Duty (OSD-later called Resident) on Gulab Singh, who now became a virtual second center of power. Later, the British Residents were also posted in Poonch, Ladakh and Baltistan. Major MacGregor became the first British Resident in Kashmir.

After taking over the reins of the State on 9 November 1846, Gulab Singh devoted himself to ending the chaotic conditions in the state and improving

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the living conditions of its people. He launched a ruthless campaign against the lawless marauders like Galwans, Khokhas and Bombas and disciplined them with an iron hand, sometimes even publicly hanging their leaders. He was feared and respected by all his subjects and the people's trust in the administration gradually increased. He released the shawl weavers from bondage by empowering them with the choice to decide their own masters. He also fixed their minimum wages, a move far ahead of his times. They could now freely export their merchandise without any fear.

Gulab Singh reformed the land distribution and agriculture sector by introducing the rationing of food grains, whose monopoly by some vested interests during times of scarcity created enormous suffering among the people. He also regularized *Jagirs*, by introducing stringent measures to control the '*Shali* (paddy) System', which laid down that the crop would be sent to the godowns of unscrupulous money-lenders. He divided Kashmir into four zones, and for each, appointed a collector to break the back of these corrupt officials.

Gulab Singh took measures to end female infanticide and the abhorrent practice of *Sati*, which were common during the Sikh rule. He also established the Finance Department to judiciously manage the State's finances, much as the Mughals had done in the rest of India. He was always accessible to his people and patiently listened to their grievances.
Gulab Singh strengthened his Army and the defences of his forts. Besides coining 'Words of Command' in Sanskrit, in place of English, he also named his army regiments after the heroes of our epics, like the Raghunath Regiment, Laxman Regiment and Gobardhan Regiment.

It was said of his times that "A bride laden with jewels could walk in the dead of night in a street of Srinagar without any fear".[4]

In the meanwhile, the British interference in the State on crucial matters kept increasing, giving rise to suspicion in the mind of Gulab Singh. Ranbir Singh, Gulab Singh's only surviving son, had been given in adoption to Suchet Singh,

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who was issueless. Gulab Singh felt that the British might invoke the notorious 'Doctrine of Lapse' to deny Ranbir Singh the sovereignty of the State after his own death. Therefore, he deputed his Prime Minister, Dewan Jwala Sahai, to convey to the Governor General the Maharaja's desire to enthrone Ranbir Singh while he was still alive. The Governor General, taking into consideration Gulab Singh's stature and his contribution in stabilizing a zone of conflict, confirmed the succession. Consequently, Ranbir Singh was installed on the throne of Jammu and Kashmir on 20 February 1856, while Gulab Singh was still alive.

"Gulab Singh was a rare combination of a soldier and a statesman, who applied his diplomatic skills so effectively that his contemporaries called him the 'Ulysses of the Hills' and Talleyrand of the East. His sharp wit, combined with remarkable level-headedness, helped him survive in the politically turbulent times in which he lived".[5] He passed away on August 4, 1858.

Ranbir Singh (1830-1885)

Before Ranbir Singh's ascension to the throne, his father, Gulab Singh, had acceded to the request of Governor General Lawrence for assistance to quell the 1857 uprising and had accordingly dispatched 2,000 infantry, 200 cavalry and artillery guns under Ranbir Singh to help the British. "As a reward for his services, Lord Canning bestowed on the Maharaja the title of C.O.S.I. (British Title- Commander of the Star of India) and rewarded him with rupees one lakh and a piece of land in Avadh as a gift. However, Ranbir Singh politely refused the latter two. In addition, the Viceroy of India, vide a *Sanad* (written order, officially issued) dated 9 March 1860, also conferred on Ranbir Singh "the right to adopt a son on the failure of having a male heir to succeed him".[6]

Ranbir Singh recorded an early success as a ruler when he secured the release of 160 soldiers captured by the Tibetans during General Zorawar Singh's campaign in December 1841. In his other significant achievement, he put down the rebellion in Gilgit and the nearby tribal areas of Yasin, Hunza and

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Nagar by his well-trained force led by Colonels Bijai Singh and Hoshiara Singh.

The British were only too happy to see Ranbir Singh extend his influence to these far-off areas as it would permit them to keep a watch on the Russians at a strategic place north of Chitral, where the boundaries of Russia, China, India and Afghanistan met. In 1877, the British stationed an officer at Gilgit for the first time, though he was later withdrawn in 1881. But in 1889, they finally placed Colonel A. G. Durand there, with the designation of British Political Officer.

With their long-term interests in mind, the British now resorted to all kinds of conspiracies to create a trust deficit between the Maharaja and the Kashmiris. A severe famine that hit Kashmir in 1877 provided an opportunity to the British to malign Ranbir Singh. Despite his administration's best efforts to provide relief to the people, the British exploited the situation by floating stories that his administration was lukewarm to the sufferings of Kashmiris. The British even concocted a fantastic story that the Maharaja had drowned over a lakh of Kashmiris in Wular Lake to save his foodgrains! However, a commission of enquiry later proved that the British Resident had concocted this conspiracy to discredit the Maharaja.

A man of a multi-faceted personality, Ranbir Singh was best known as an administrator, law-maker, patron of learning and temple builder. During the Afghan and Sikh rule, agriculture had suffered, the justice system had become corrupt, the administration had ground to a halt and the plethora of taxes levied had broken the back of common people. Ranbir Singh overhauled the administrative machinery by creating separate departments for the army, foreign relations, home affairs, civil department and religious endowments.
He took a far-reaching step by formulating the Ranbir Panel Code, or the RPC, which in his time went by the name of *Ranbir Dandh Bhidi*. This code stood the test of time and remained in force in the State till 5 August 2019, when Article 370 was abolished. He also overhauled the taxation,

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transportation and communication systems. By extending the telegraph services from Sialkot to the State, he introduced postal and telecommunication services in the state in 1877.

Maharaja Ranbir Singh

Maharaja Ranbir Singh built countless temples, including the Raghunath Temple complex, Ranbireshwar Temple and Panchwakhatra temples in Jammu, and Gadadar ji in Parmandal and Uttarbehini. He published many significant compendiums on astrology, medicine and rituals. He got thousands of precious and rare Sanskrit texts and scriptures collected from all over India and housed these in the Sanskrit Library in Raghunath Mandir at Jammu, now known as the Sri Ranbir Sanskrit Research Institute.

He also established a printing press in the State, where the *Jammu and Kashmir Gazette* was published for the first time in 1882. He was instrumental in getting books on astronomy, mathematics, physics, zoology and chemistry translated from Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian and English into Dogri, Urdu and Hindi. Writing about this, the celebrated translator of *Rajatarangini*, Auriel

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Stein, observes, "Ranbir Singh did this in a spirit of true enlightenment as he desired to promote the understanding between the Hindu and Muslim scholars in his domain".[7]

All educational institutes of the State were affiliated with the Punjab University, Lahore, to which the Maharaja donated Rupees one lakh. "When the University started its regular academic sessions in 1882, Maharaja Ranbir Singh's name was entered as the' First Fellow of Punjab University".[8]

The Maharaja established hospitals for the free distribution of medicines to the poor. He also laid a network of roads and inns for the convenience of travelers. The construction of the Jhelum Valley Road between Srinagar and Kohala was started in his time, though it was completed later. He also extended the telegraph from Srinagar to Gilgit and thence to Skardu in 1882.

The Maharaja threw open the Jama Masjid in Srinagar, which had been closed in 1820 during Sikh rule. He also donated Rupees six thousand to the committee created under Khwaja Rahim Shah to collect funds for carrying out the repairs of the mosque. He also constructed a water duct for ablutions.

With the help of the Anglo-Indian press, the British, in the meanwhile, continued to project Ranbir Singh as an oppressive ruler. In 1867, in order to establish their control over the trade routes to Central Asia, the British established their Trade Agency at Leh.

In 1884, the Government of India appointed a Resident Political Officer in the State. Though his limited brief was to deal with the matters concerning the frontier, he soon started indulging in activities inimical to the Maharaja and presented a dismal picture of the state's administration to his masters at Delhi. Consequently, Ranbir Singh was compelled to write to the Governor General, "The administration of my State is improving daily so much that notwithstanding that the country is covered with forests and the inhabitants are armed; ... the crimes of willful homicide, murder and burglary are very

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rare. The police force has increased to three times its number in the past three years. The reason for the all-around progress of the state is that I supervise all the State affairs".[9]

During his twenty-eight years of rule, Maharaja Ranbir Singh brought unparalleled prosperity to his people and successfully foiled the British attempts to undermine his authority. He passed away on 12 September 1885.

Pratap Singh (1850-1925)

Pratap Singh assumed the reins of power on 25 September 1885 after the mourning period following the death of his father was over. His 40-year rule was marred by the brazen and aggressive British assertion. They accused him of hobnobbing with the Russian Empire and he was consequently deposed, even though temporarily. He was reinstated only after the Calcutta (now Kolkata)-based *Amrita Bazaar Patrika*, exposed the intrigue in an article entitled 'Condemned Unheard'.

Pratap Singh's two younger brothers, Raja Ram Singh and Raja Amar Singh, were two strong pillars which strengthened the state institutions and consolidated the Dogra Empire. Raja Ram Singh, as the Commander-in-Chief of the State Forces, helped protect the territorial integrity of the state, and Raja Amar Singh, a statesman of rare qualities, preserved the state's independence and integrity despite huge challenges. The latter constructed the Amar Mahal Palace, under the supervision of a French architect, on a hill overlooking the Tawi River. He also presided over the Council of Ministers and served as the prime minister till he died in 1908. Though both brothers were not always on the same page as the Maharaja, there was, however, little conflict of consequence which would harm the state.

Gradually, the Resident became too assertive and began exercising a veto on the decisions taken by the Council and even wielded judicial powers to try civil suits! He fomented communal disharmony among the people to fan rebellion

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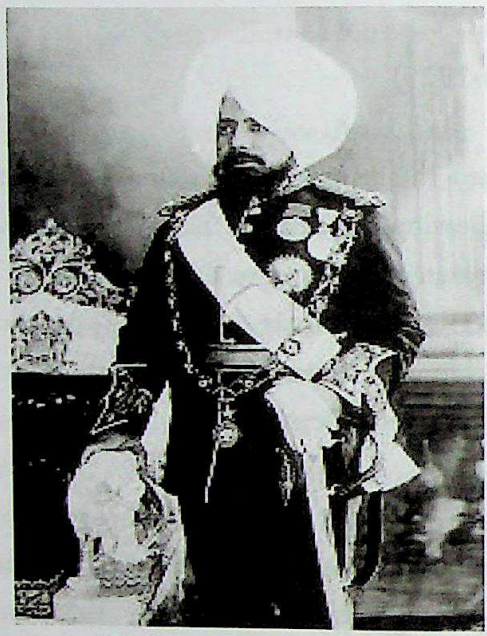
in the majority community. In 1889, Parry S. Nisbet, the newly-appointed Resident, forced the Maharaja to sign his own resignation, which was then forwarded to the Foreign Secretary of the Government of India, Sir Mortimer Durand, for early acceptance. Through this edict, the Maharaja also announced his own temporary abdication in favor of a council, with Raja Amar Singh as its President.



Maharaja Pratap Singh

Accordingly, the Maharaja was stripped of his powers as a ruler. His powers were transferred to a five-member council, having both his brothers, though the actual powers came to be wielded by the Resident. Despite all this, and the enormous pressure put on the Maharaja to grant permission to the British to own land in the State, Pratap Singh stood his ground and denied the British any such permission. This was one of the reasons for the construction of House Boats, an institution quite unique to Kashmir.

All these orchestrated events were only a ploy used by the "British to gain control over Gilgit Agency".[10] In these turbulent times, it was Raja Amar Singh who safeguarded the state's interests.

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Pratap Singh was a pious and generous person who strove hard to improve the lot of his subjects. He opened up the educational institutions in the state to all citizens, irrespective of caste or community. He established the renowned Sri Pratap College in Srinagar in 1905 (with the help of Annie Besant) and the Prince of Wales College at Jammu in 1907, besides taking initial steps to make primary school education free. He also established the Amar Singh Technical Institute at Srinagar in 1914 and Sri Pratap Technical School at Jammu in 1924. Pratap Singh established well-equipped dispensaries, maternity hospitals and general hospitals in all important towns of both regions of the State. He introduced vaccination, particularly against cholera, which hit the state nearly five times between 1896 and 1910.

Maharaja Pratap Singh was the first to make a humble beginning in introducing a democratic process through which people could send their representatives to the local bodies by establishing municipalities in Srinagar and Jammu. It was during his reign that Persian was replaced as the court language with Urdu. The first Land Settlement in the State, the establishment of the Departments of Agriculture and Forests and the creation of cooperative societies were all accomplished during his reign.

The path-breaking land reforms were initiated in 1887; these rationalized the land and its tax revenue based on three parameters: production, collection and the scope of irrigation. These reforms also fixed the land revenue, to be paid only in cash for fourteen years, without using any coercive methods for its collection. Occupancy rights were conferred on the cultivators and the rate of revenue tax was rationalized. Under certain conditions, landholders were given permanent, non-alienable hereditary rights. "After the Sir Lawrence Walter-Land Reforms came into effect, the generous Maharaja waived a hefty outstanding land revenue tax totaling rupees thirty-one lakhs".[11]

Among his many achievements were the extension of the rail line, which terminated at Sialkot, to Jammu and opened it to the public on 13 March 1890; construction of the Srinagar-Rawalpindi (railhead) cart road, and

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extending the existing Kohala-Baramula Jhelum Valley Road further to Srinagar in 1897. The Banihal Cart Road between Srinagar and Jammu was opened in 1922. It was on Pratap Singh's instructions that the survey of the route for laying a railway line between Jammu and Srinagar was carried out in 1889. The project did not take off due to lack of funds, estimated to be rupees 3.52 crores.

Pratap Singh also got an extensive network of canals constructed, resulting in thousands of acres of land getting irrigated. This included the Ranbir Canal in Jammu, whose waters ran the turbines of the hydroelectric plants in Jammu, besides bringing 125,956 acres of land under irrigation. Others included Martand Canal, Lal Khul, Pratap Canal, Basantpur Canal and Upper Jhelum Canal. "A spill channel to relieve the pressure of water in Jhelum during floods was constructed between Ram Munshi Bagh and Pandrethan in Kashmir. Similarly, a weir was constructed at Chattabal in Srinagar to maintain a sufficient level of water in Jhelum during droughts".[12] Two power plants, one each in Kashmir (Mohra) and Jammu, were also established in 1902.

The Department of Horticulture, established in 1897 with the help of French experts, helped improve the quality and quantity of the indigenously produced fruit. In 1907, a factory to rear the silkworm cocoons was established in Srinagar with imported seeds from Italy and France. In due course, the Kashmiri farmers turned this into the world's largest industry of its kind that by 1920, produced a hundred thousand kgs of raw cocoons. The State Mineral Department too was established to explore the mineral wealth of the state through foreign companies.

Contrary to the claims made by some vested interests in Kashmir that Kashmiri Pandits had cornered a disproportionately large number of jobs in the State, the facts were quite to the contrary. Most of the senior appointments in the administration were filled by educated, well-trained and experienced officers from outside the State. "All high positions in the State are given to non-Kashmiris, i.e., men from the Punjab, Bengal, etc".[13] However, this monopoly

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of the administration by outsiders created strong resentment among the native nobility and the feudal class, leading to the successor of Maharaja Pratap Singh enacting the State Subject Law.

In 1895, some nominal powers were transferred back to Pratap Singh as the situation in the North Western Frontier Province had now stabilized though the British continued to retain control over Foreign Affairs, Finance, Armed Forces and Administrative appointments.

During World War I (1914-1918), the Maharaja placed all his resources at the disposal of the British. The political situation in the country around this period also turned turbulent and the Jallianwala Bagh massacre shook the British rule in India. For the Maharaja, however, it had a positive fall-out as some of his royal powers were restored to him on 4 February 1921. However, the control over Gilgit Agency was retained by the British. To keep Maharaja's powers in check, a five-member State Executive Council was formed with Wakefield as its Chief Secretary. The Council remained functional till the death of Maharaja Pratap Singh in 1925.

During Pratap Singh's reign, Maulvi Rasul Shah, the Mirwaiz of Kashmir, established *Anjuman Nusrat-ul-Islam* in 1905 for the spread of the doctrine of Islam. By early 1920, the Anjuman had come to wield considerable political and religious influence over the people of Kashmir. This influence was largely used by it to sow the seeds of distrust among the Kashmiri Muslims against the Dogra Rule. In 1924, the Muslim workers of the state-owned silk factory went on a strike demanding an increase in wages and removal of the 'corrupt' management, made up of Kashmiri Pandits. Eventually, it took the shape of a virulent communal protest against the Dogra rule under the leadership of Khawaja Saad-*ud*-Din Shawl. After receiving a petition containing a litany of demands from Shawl, the British Resident, Lord Reading, formed a three-member committee consisting of Mr. Glancy, the State Finance Minister, Colonel Janak Singh and Chaudhary Khushi Mohamad Nazir to examine the allegations. The report submitted by the Committee, after due deliberations,

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came to the conclusion that the allegations leveled against the Maharaja were exaggerated and unfounded. Around the same time, the communal politics of Punjab made inroads into Kashmir for the first time. Maharaja Pratap Singh died on 23 September 1925 at Srinagar.

Hari Singh (1895-1961)

Pratap Singh was succeeded by his nephew, Maharaja Sir Hari Singh Bahadur, son of Raja Amar Singh. As Pratap Singh had no children, Hari Singh, being the only lineal descendant alive, ascended to the throne. In 1908, at the age of 13, Hari Singh was sent to Mayo College at Ajmer in Rajputana (now Rajasthan), for his early education and later to Imperial Cadet Corps, Dehradun, for military training. After completing his training at Dehradun, Hari Singh, at the age of 20, was appointed the Commander-in-Chief of State Forces. He immediately instituted measures to modernize the state army, besides introducing a system of direct commission of officers.

In November 1919, the young prince was sent on a tour to Europe, where he became a victim of a deep-rooted conspiracy to malign him in the eyes of Maharaja Pratap Singh. However, the Maharaja saw through the game and lodged a strong protest with the State Department against their attempt to vilify the young prince. This episode left a lasting impression on the Maharaja about the British manipulations and their ill intentions.

After ascending the throne on 23 September 1925, Hari Singh succeeded, though partially, in his efforts to get back control of the Gilgit agency by persuading the British to replace their forces there with a detachment of State forces.

In March 1927, Maharaja Hari Singh abolished the Council of Executive Members and, in its place, created a six-member Council of Ministers, consisting of one each of Bengali, Dogra, Kashmiri Muslim, Khatri, Englishman and a Kashmiri Pandit (P. K. Wanal). A year later, he established a

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High Court in the state, with Sir Burjor Dalal as the Chief Justice and two other judges.

Maharaja Hari Singh

Hari Singh's respect for all religions and people of different castes and faiths was articulated by him in 1925 when he said: "If I am considered worth governing this state, then I will say that for me all communities, religions and races are equal. As a ruler, I have no problem. All religions are mine and my religion is 'Justice'....my duty is to look at everyone with equality. I shall, as far as possible, work with justice".[14] He introduced several reforms in economic, social, legal, educational and agricultural fields. By enacting the 'Agricultural Relief Act', he set free thousands of peasants and rural poor from the clutches of moneylenders. Similarly, the 'Land Alienation Act' bestowed ownership rights on the tiller and to the landless over the state land. "His administration provided quality inputs like fertilizers and seeds of superior quality to peasants. Bulls of Dhani and Sindhi breeds, imported from outside, were provided in some selected villages. To give additional relief to the farmers, he increased the

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state share of land revenue to 30% of the gross produce, giving some relief to the cultivators".[15] Hari Singh also created avenues for the livelihood of Gaddis, Bakarwals, Changpas and Chopans living in far-flung areas of the State by improving sheep breeding and establishing the wool industry.

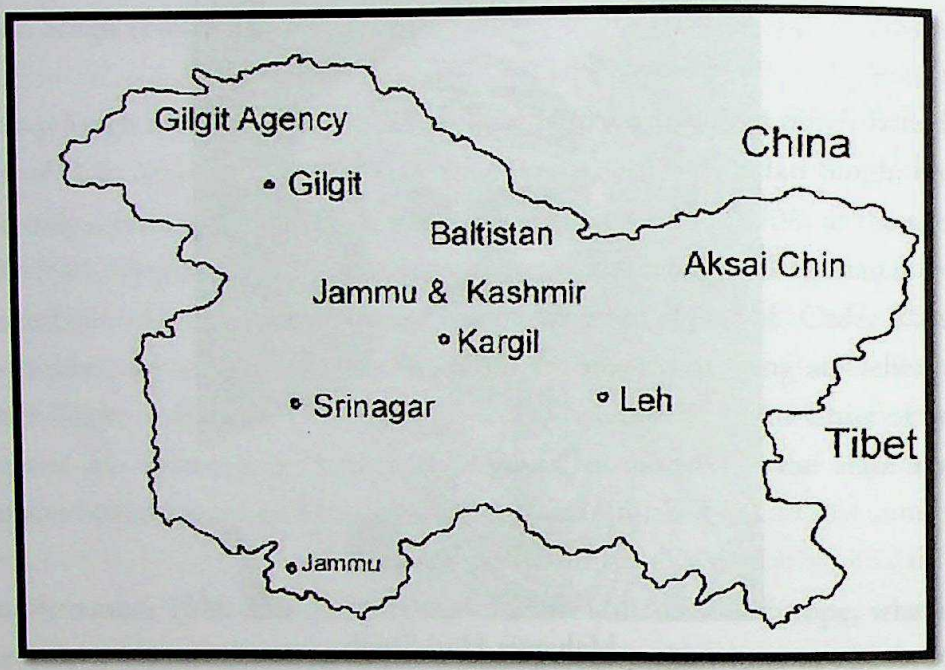

Fig 1: Map of the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir State in 1947 ruled by Maharaja Hari Singh

In 1935, the Maharaja enacted the Jammu and Kashmir Village Panchayat Regulation which led to the establishment of the first Panchayat in 1936.

Though the reformation of the *Begar*[a] (forced labor) had started earlier, it was completely abolished during Hari Singh's rule. He established industries manufacturing matchboxes, carpets, tents, woodwork articles, silk yarn and tannery products, which utilized raw materials available within the state and

[a] *'Begar'* was the practice of forcibly gathering a collection of labourers to carry loads for the State Forces to difficult areas in Ladakh, through treacherous terrain, that left many dead and injured.

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exempted these from various taxes. In 1940, Hari Singh established a Resin and Turpentine factory at Mira Sahib.

He got tourist facilities developed at some resorts, like Pahalgam and Gulmarg, besides setting up emporia in Srinagar and Jammu, which provided ready markets for the traders. He also established the Jammu and Kashmir Bank replacing the state treasury. When WW II created widespread food scarcity, his administration provided essential food items at controlled prices to the poor through rationing.

In the field of healthcare, which at that time was rather rudimentary, he made it mandatory for people to be vaccinated against smallpox. Vaccination drives were also launched to prevent the further spread of cholera, which had killed many people in 1935. Similarly, TB Hospitals were established at Kud and Tangmarg. In 1943, he opened Sri Maharaja Gulab Singh (SMGS) Hospital in Jammu, and in 1945, Sri Maharaja Hari Singh (SMHS) Hospital at Srinagar. With a capacity of 320 beds, the latter was arguably the biggest hospital in the country at that time. The Maharaja also got the Public Health Department to construct a large number of tanks, dig bore wells and provide potable water to the people.

Through the 'Compulsory Primary Education Regulation' enacted in 1930, it became mandatory for parents to send their children aged between 6 and 11 years to schools. Soon, nearly every town with a population of over 500 had a primary school, called *Jabri* (compulsory/by force) schools locally. A chain of educational institutes from beyond primary to college level, upgraded with better infrastructure and modern facilities, was also established in many towns. In addition, education till the secondary level was made free. Deserving students from poor families were selected for a grant of scholarship to study within or outside the country, particularly in America and Europe. To encourage Muslim students to acquire modern education, 31 Arabic teachers were employed; 160 scholarships were sanctioned for Sikh students too.

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Two teacher-training colleges, one each at Jammu and Srinagar, were opened in 1932. Two intermediate colleges were opened in Mirpur and Poonch in 1944. To encourage female literacy, the Prince of Wales College was turned into a co-educational institution till Maharani Tara Devi Mahila College was established in Jammu in 1944. Hari Singh also established a publicity department, which later became the Jammu and Kashmir Information Department.

The Maharaja introduced reforms to end social maladies like untouchability, child marriage, female infanticide, trafficking of women, etc. Hari Singh enacted the Infant Marriage Prevention Regulation in June 1928, which laid down the lawful age for marriage at 14 and 18 for girls and boys, respectively. To encourage widow remarriage, the Maharaja introduced the Hindu Widow Remarriage and Property Regulation Act in 1931 which gave liberty to widows to remarry. Additionally, Dhandevi Memorial Fund (named after his first wife) was established for performing the marriage of poor girls. Legislation to declare prostitution and other social evils illegal was also enacted.

In 1932, he introduced unprecedented reforms by permitting access to all schools, colleges, wells and temples to 'untouchables. Finally, untouchability was declared a crime in 1941. Setting a personal example, the Maharaja worshipped 101 Harijan girls during *Navratras.*

He made the application of capital punishment to Rajputs and Brahmins who, according to the law in existence, could not be awarded this punishment. Maharaja Hari Singh treated his Muslim subjects with care and dignity.

In July 1928, the Maharaja banned children from selling or smoking tobacco in public places. In April 1941, the State Assembly abolished polyandry. Similarly, he also discouraged polygamy which, however, was not a common practice.

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In April 1932, Hari Singh enacted the Press and Publication Act, which led to the growth in the publication of newspapers from one (Urdu Weekly—*Ranbir*) when he ascended the throne to 67 by June 1949, when he was forced to abdicate.

The Maharaja also modernized his Army by reorganizing its formations, raising more cavalry units, improving the mobility of its artillery, raising new infantry units, etc. He laid emphasis on commissioning only the meritorious youth as officers. In 1923, he established a modern cantonment in Srinagar, which other states later emulated.

In the meanwhile, the British continued to look for every opportunity to weaken the Maharaja, as the latter had refused to hand over Gilgit to Britain and had taken a patriotic stand at the First Round Table Conference in London (12 November 1930 and 15 January 1931). Their immediate objective, however, was to compel Hari Singh to hand over Gilgit, the all-important strategic outpost in the Great Game[16], to the British on lease. During Hari Singh's reign, the activities of the Ahrar Party, formed exclusively of the radical Muslims of Punjab, led to bitterness between Hindus and Muslims, particularly in the Jammu region.

Rise of Kashmiri Majoritarianism

In 1927, the Maharaja had to bow to the demands of some Kashmiri professionals and white-collar workers to permit their recruitment into the army and government services. A couple of years later, in 1930, Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues, Mohammad Rajab, Qazi Saif-ud-Din and Ghulam Ahmed Mukhtar, returned to Srinagar after completing their studies at Aligarh Muslim University, where they had come into close contact with rabid Muslim communalists. This informal group formed itself into the Muslim Reading Room Party to oppose the Dogra rule in general and the Maharaja in particular. However, as their activities increased, conflict soon arose with Ahmad Ullah, the Mirwaiz of Kashmir, who was not in favor of opposing the Maharaja. In March 1931, at the demise of Ahmad Ullah, the

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mantle of Mirwaiz fell on Maulvi Yousuf Shah, who had received his religious education at the theological College at Deobandh. Maulvi Yousuf Shah became a willing supporter of the Reading Room Party and helped it by organizing large gatherings in various mosques in Kashmir. Sheikh Abdullah emerged as a star campaigner as he could arouse religious frenzy among his audiences. In him, Wakefield found a promising candidate who could undermine the Dogra kings and consequently strengthen the British to achieve their own strategic aims. From here on, Sheikh Abdullah was provided with all kinds of support, including financial, by Wakefield. The Reading Room Party's meetings now shifted from the mosques into the open, reaching out to the middle classes and the peasants.

Though the Reading Room Party's agenda was ostensibly to oppose the feudal Dogra rule, its communal outlook was its defining feature. The Maharaja's return from Cannes, where he had gone to welcome the birth of his son on 9 March 1931, witnessed a spontaneous outburst of joy throughout the State. The residents of Srinagar formed a Reception Committee under the Deputy Commissioner, Pandit Balkak Dhar. The Reading Room Party immediately raised objections to a Kashmiri Pandit heading this Committee. Subsequently, the Muslim Reading Room Party formed its own committee under Mir Maqbool Shah. However, when the Maharaja got wind of it, he refused permission for both.

Soon thereafter, rumors of blasphemy, in this case, *Tauheen-e-Quran,* (disrespect to Holy Quran) were published by the Muslim press, vitiating the atmosphere. Some communal organizations, particularly, The Young Men's Muslim Association of Jammu, used these events to incite communal passions, leading to some violent incidents, particularly in Jammu. The situation was handled with deft diplomacy and large-scale violence was prevented. A committee headed by Muslims was formed to investigate the events. The report submitted by the committee exonerated the alleged culprits of any wrongdoing. Projecting himself as the messiah of Muslims, Sheikh Abdullah, however, used this so-called act of blasphemy to spew venom against the

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Maharaja during a public meeting at Jama Masjid, Srinagar. Later other speakers followed on 11 July 1931 at the Makhdum Sahib's fair. A Muslim was also caught while attempting to break the idol in the Shankaracharya Temple. It was, however, Sheikh Abdullah's speeches that kept the atmosphere charged for the most significant event, which occurred on 13 July, when large-scale violence was perpetrated on the hapless Kashmiri Pandits.

The immediate cause of this violence was the rabble-rousing speech delivered in a meeting (attended by two Mir Waizes) by Abdul Qadir, a cook of a European visitor, a few days earlier, inciting hate and violence. He said, "We should end Hindu Raj and the time has come when we should meet force by greater force to put an end to the tyranny and brutalities to which you are subjected. You must rely on your strength and wage a relentless war against the opposition. You must use lathis and other weapons if the need arises. Pointing his finger towards the Palace, he thundered, "raze it to the ground".[17]

Subsequently, Abdul Qadir was apprehended in Khanqa-e-Maula Mosque on 25 June 1931 and charged with offences under Sections 124 A (treason) and 153 A (creating hatred between two communities). Adding fuel to the fire, Sheikh Abdullah delivered a fiery speech in a meeting organized by the Reading Room Party at Jama Masjid in which he exhorted the people to be ready to make any sacrifice for Islam. Consequently, thousands of people thronged the Session Court of Pandit Kishan Lal Kitchlu whenever Abdul Qadir was brought to the court. Tempers ran high on these occasions as Wakefield, the Political and Police Minister, did everything to fan the trouble further.

Despite the Maharaja issuing an appeal for peace Sheikh Abdullah delivered another fiery speech at a mosque in Gawkadal on 12 July 1931, aggravating the situation further. As the situation continued to get worse, the Chief Justice of the High Court ordered that the trial of Abdul Qadir be held inside the Central Jail premises. When Wakefield received this confidential order for compliance, he leaked it to the leaders of the Reading Room Party. They, in

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turn, sent messages all across the Valley, asking people to assemble at the Central Jail the next day, i.e., 13 July, when the trial inside the jail was to begin.

On that day, when the Sessions Judge entered the jail premises, he found a mammoth crowd also trying to force entry into the jail. The defense counsels of the accused (Muslims), too, appealed to the crowd to calm down and disperse, but to no avail. The Superintendent of Police, who arrived at the scene on the orders of the Judge, found the restive crowd turning aggressive.

Finding that there was no possibility of ingress into the jail premises, the violent crowd rushed to the outer gate and overpowered the guard. The police arrested four people, but the crowd started pelting stones and brickbats at the officials and succeeded in freeing these four arrested persons. They then cut the telephone lines and set the quarters of the jail guard on fire while attempts were also made to snatch the rifles from the armed police, some of whom had been seriously injured. A lathi charge, ordered as a consequence, proved ineffective.

The District Magistrate's announcement that the police would have to use force to disperse the crowd, too, had no effect. Thereafter, to control the situation, the police first fired in the air as a warning, but when this too had no effect on the violent mob, the police fired for effect, which claimed 21 lives, with 42 people sustaining injuries.

The violent mobs then proceeded towards Maharajganj, the business hub, and looted the shops and business establishments of the Hindus, particularly of Kashmiri Pandits. In an extensive area from Bohri Kadal to Alikadal and Safakadal, all Kashmiri Pandit shops were looted and burnt, and the community members molested. Similarly, an orgy of violence and mayhem was let loose on Vicharnag and Chhatabal, which had a sizable number of Kashmiri Pandits, particularly in the former. At Vicharnag, the violence continued for three hours till Colonel Nawab Khusro Jung reached Vicharnag with a contingent of Palace Guards. He later confirmed the untold atrocities

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committed on the Pandits there. Forcible conversion of Hindus, too, was reported from some towns. The rioters also cut the telephone lines at Banihal and burnt the Sangam Bridge, 23 miles south of Srinagar. Nine members of a Pandit family in Kanikoot in Budgam district, which had a sizable Kashmiri Pandit population, were axed to death by Muslims of a neighboring village. The lone survivor was a young boy who was not sleeping in the house during the night when it was attacked.

The Maharaja appointed a Commission of Enquiry into these happenings on 14 July 1931 and gave an opportunity to everyone to present their grievances to him personally. On 5 August, the Kashmiri Pandits, who had suffered the worst, presented their grievances through Prem Nath Bazaz, the President of the Sanatan Dharam Young Men's Association of Kashmir.

The enquiry report, submitted to the Maharaja on 24 September 1931, revealed that these events were a result of a conspiracy hatched by the British Political Department, headed by Wakefield and the Muslim Reading Room Party, headed by Sheikh Abdullah, to discredit the Maharaja's government. With too many fingers pointing towards Wakefield as the main conspirator of these events, Hari Singh removed him from the Council of Ministers. But Wakefield continued to finance and direct the activities of the Reading Room Party even after his removal and relocation to Murree.

On 25 July 1931, the Maharaja appointed Raja Hari Kishan Kaul, first as the Minister-in-Waiting and subsequently elevated him to the post of prime minister. On 21 September, Kaul got the 'chief mischief maker', Sheikh Abdullah, arrested. As a retaliatory measure, the Reading Room Party created a War Council under Mufti Jalaluddin, who organized violent demonstrations in many towns, including Shopian, where a Head Constable was killed. An attack on an army picket in Anantnag later compelled the administration to deploy the army. In the retaliatory firing by the police, 19 people were killed and 30 wounded, creating even more violence. The situation was later brought under

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control by Brigadier Sutherland of the State Forces. People were ordered to recite, "Hail to the shoes of Sutherland".

The government of India, waiting for an opportunity to undermine the Maharaja, now specified four demands that the Maharaja had to accept within 24 hours. Eventually, it fell on Raja Hari Kishan Kaul to use all his diplomatic skills to diffuse matters in such a way that both parties felt it was a win-win situation for them. Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues were granted a general amnesty, but only after they gave the undertaking to maintain peace.

The Ahrar Party, however, did not take kindly to the 'cowardly' manner in which Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues had negotiated their release. They, therefore, sent their own cadres, consisting of 2,000 volunteers each, to the Valley and Jammu to create trouble for the Maharaja.

Between September and December 1931, the situation in Jammu turned so bad that even the British Government was forced to stop the movement of Ahrar cadres into the State. It now appointed Middleton to head a new enquiry commission to investigate the recent violent events after compelling the Maharaja to dissolve the one formed by him under the Chief Justice of J&K High Court. In January 1932, Middleton submitted his report, which put the whole blame on the State Administration for these events.

On 9 January 1932, Sheikh Abdullah was arrested again after he delivered a vitriolic speech in Khanqa-e-Maula, inciting the people to violence in support of Mufti Zia-ud-Din of Poonch, who had been expelled from the State on charges of sedition. Sheikh Abdullah was tried and sentenced to 6 months imprisonment.

Maulvi Mohammad Zaman and Maulvi Mohammad Ismail of Amritsar delivered fiery speeches against the Maharaja after the Friday prayers on 15 January 1932 in support of the 'No Rent Movement' launched by the Muslim Young Men's Association in Jammu, leading to violent attacks on the Hindus

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and Sikhs in Rajouri, Kotli and Mirpur. Hindu and Sikh refugees, who had sought shelter in Mirpur, were set upon by the rampaging mobs who burnt them alive, with their women being abducted and raped and many being forcibly converted to Islam. The Gurudwara at Alibeg was also set on fire and reduced to ashes. Similar events were witnessed at Darhal, Bharot and Shahadra, in which the Ahrar cadres played a prominent role. With the situation getting out of hand, the Maharaja requested British help to control the situation. This was the opportunity that the British had been waiting for. As a quid pro quo, the British demanded the removal of Hari Kishan Kaul. Accordingly, he was replaced by the British nominee, Lt Colonel E. J. D. Covin, an ICS Officer, on 22 February. Additionally, the British demanded the appointment of Sir B. J. Glancy to head a Commission of Enquiry into the recent events and the examination of the grievances of the Muslims.

The Glancy Report, submitted to the Maharaja on 22 March 1932, and accepted by the latter under duress, justified all the demands put forth by Sheikh Abdullah, who now called it his victory. This raised his stature, though it was the Mirza of Qadian and other Ahmadis who had orchestrated the whole chain of events and were the guiding force behind Sheikh Abdullah. On his release from prison on 4 June, the first thing that Sheikh Abdullah did was commit his allegiance to Covin, the new Prime Minister.

Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues, namely Chaudhary Ghulam Abbas, Sheikh Ghulam Qadir and Mistri Yaqub Ali, now decided to form a single political platform to oppose the Maharaja politically. This decision led to the formation of the All-Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference (MC), whose inaugural session was held between 14 and 16 October 1932, in Pathar Masjid, Srinagar, with Sheikh Abdullah as its President. Between 1932 and February 1934, MC organized many protests, some of which turned violent, leading to deaths in Pulwama and Bijbehara in Kashmir. Apprehending arrest, Sheikh Abdullah convened a meeting of the Working Committee of the MC in Sialkot on 10 February, wherein he suggested the suspension of the protests and initiation of talks with the government. However, the members rejected

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his suggestions not because of a lack of merit in what the Sheikh said, but because of his association with the Qadianis. Eventually, the MC replaced Abdullah with Chaudhary Abbas, signaling a shift in the leadership of the party to Jammu.

Chaudhary Abbas now demanded the constitution of the Legislative Assembly in the State, as recommended by the Glancy Commission. Prime Minister Covin rejected his demand, leading to Abbas launching a civil disobedience movement. Soon thereafter, Abbas, along with his colleagues, was arrested and sentenced to one year's imprisonment. Sheikh Abdullah again took over as the president and in April 1934, formally announced the withdrawal of the movement.

In October 1934, Maharaja Hari Singh established the Legislative Assembly, known as *Praja Sabha,* with 75 members—33 to be elected through restricted participation. The inaugural session of the *Praja Sabha* was held on 17 October. The Muslim Conference did not fight the election on the grounds that most of its leaders were in jail. Eventually, the Sheikh was replaced by Mian Ahmad Yar as President of the MC in its third session held at Sopore from 11-13 November.

With the British now firmly in the saddle, Covin pressurized the Maharaja to hand over Gilgit Agency to the British, threatening him even with dethronement. Accordingly, Gilgit *Wazarat* was transferred to the British for 60 years' lease through a deed signed on 26 March 1935. Having accomplished his mission, Covin was transferred back to ICS after some gap and replaced by Sir Gopala Swamy Iyengar on 17 April 1937.

Having realized that the MC leadership was unlikely to let him make inroads into the Muslims of the Jammu region, the Sheikh, in order to achieve his political ambitions, started planning to garner the support of the State's Hindus and other non-Muslims. Accordingly, he decided to change the constitution of the MC as also its name, besides cutting off his relations with

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the Muslim League. In its sixth session held at Jammu on 26 and 27 March 1938, under the presidentship of Sheikh Abdullah, a resolution to this effect was moved, but it was rejected. However, later on 28 June, at Srinagar, the Sheikh succeeded in having the resolution passed in its Working Committee, which recommended to the General Council the adoption of the following resolution: "..... the name and Constitution of the organization be so altered and amended that all such people who desire to participate in the political struggle may easily become members of the Conference irrespective of their caste, creed, or religion".[18]

In January 1938, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, in his meeting with Sheikh Abdullah, assured the latter of Congress support if he changed the name of the Muslim Conference to some secular name. Subsequently, during his tour of the North West Frontier with Pandit Nehru, Sheikh Abdullah became convinced of the necessity of aligning himself with the activities of the Indian National Congress.

On 11 June 1939, the name of Kashmir-MC was changed to J&K National Conference (JKNC) during a session of the MC held under the chairmanship of Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq, though not without opposition from Chaudhary Hamid Ullah and others. From among the Kashmiri Pandits, Prem Nath Bazaz, Jia Lal Kilam, Kashyap Bandhu and a Sikh, Sardar Budh Singh, were inducted into the National Conference Working Committee. The entire Muslim Press and other staunch communalists condemned the change. The resentment of influential leaders of the MC continued to grow as the JKNC's tilt towards Indian National Congress (INC) became quite pronounced.

On 22 March 1940, the All-India Muslim League passed a resolution at Lahore for the creation of a separate independent state for the Muslims of India. Senior leaders of NC, which included Ch. Hamidullah, Ch. Ghulam Abbas, and Allah Rakha Sagar, supported the Muslim League's demand while rejecting the secular overtures of JKNC. When Pandit Nehru and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, during their visit to Kashmir in May 1940, were given a rousing

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reception by Sheikh Abdullah, it further widened the gulf. Finally, on 10 October, these leaders broke away from the NC and revived the Muslim Conference at Jammu. However, the change of name did not, in any way, change the communal nature of NC. Sheikh Abdullah's ambition was to gain political power, even if it meant aligning with the INC.

During World War II, Maharaja Hari Singh had extended all support to the Crown, sending nearly 45,000 troops, which included 8 infantry units, one artillery battery and 40,000 U.S. dollars for purchasing half a squadron of fighter aircraft for Britain. The Maharaja also placed eight ambulances at the disposal of the viceroy at Delhi's Kashmir House.

In the meanwhile, the British Government succeeded in removing Gopala Swamy Iyengar from the premiership. On 9 April 1943, Raja Sir Maharaj Singh was appointed as the next PM. Other changes saw Ram Chander Kak, the Chief Secretary of the State, being elevated to the post of Minister-in-Waiting and Justice Ganga Nath being appointed as the new Chief Justice of the State. However, within three months of his appointment, Maharaj Singh was replaced by Sir Kailash Narain Haksar on 26 July as the PM of the State. He took on Muslim communalism head-on.

Around this period, to meet the demand of British troops involved in World War II, huge quantities of food grains were exported from India. This led to the skyrocketing of food grain prices in the local markets, particularly in Jammu, creating enormous resentment among the people. Consequently, massive demonstrations were held in Jammu City and adjoining areas. The police resorted to heavy-handed methods to crush the protests, in which 9 people were killed and several injured. These killings further inflamed the passion in Jammu and led to even bigger protests. After the institution of an enquiry commission, headed by the former Justice of Bombay High Court, Sir Govind Madgaonkar, into the killings, peace was restored. The report, submitted by the Enquiry Commission on 5 January 1944, held the local administration responsible for the excessive use of force, resulting in the loss of

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precious life. As a result, Haksar was replaced by Sir B. N. Ray, a retired Judge of the Calcutta High Court, as the new PM of the State on 4 February 1944.

Earlier, in October 1943, some important leaders of the Muslim League held secret parleys with Sheikh Abdullah and MC leaders in Kashmir in order to reconcile the two factions. Sardar Budh Singh, President of the JKNC, was not kept in the loop. Sheikh Abdullah was advised to seek Jinnah's arbitration in the matter. Accordingly, he and Maulana Mohammad Syed visited Lahore and met Jinnah. The meeting ended in failure as Jinnah urged them to support the Muslim League's struggle for Pakistan. Later, during Jinnah's visit to Kashmir, at the invitation of NC, Sheikh Abdullah showered praise on him for his services to the Ummah. However, Jinnah reciprocated by warning the Sheikh to cut their relations with INC. Later, Jinnah attended the Annual Session of MC held in Jama Masjid, Srinagar, on 16-17 June 1944. In his speech, Jinnah exhorted the people to rally around the MC and turn it into the sole voice of the people of the state. In other words, he asked the Sheikh to wind up his JKNC. Upset with Jinnah's assertion, Sheikh Abdullah, at a public meeting at Khanayar on 20 June, while using vituperative and offensive language, accused Jinnah of interfering in the state and asked him to leave the state, forgetting that it was at his invitation that Jinnah had come to Kashmir.

After touring various war fronts as a member of Churchill's war cabinet, the Maharaja returned to the state on 22 June 1944. People of the state gave him a rousing reception in which both JKNC and MC, too, joined. At Mujahid Manzil in Srinagar, Sheikh Abdullah personally presented the 'New Kashmir Plan' to the Maharaja after garlanding him. This Plan provided for the perpetuation of the Dogra Dynasty as a constitutional monarchy in the party's future 'Policies and Programs'.

Jinnah, who had been in the state for over a month and a half, sought an audience with the Maharaja, but the latter politely declined.

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In October 1944, to further democratize his government, the Maharaja inducted Mirza Afzal Beg (of JKNC) and Wazir Ganga Ram (from Jammu) into his cabinet. On 25 June 1945, Maharaja appointed Pandit Ram Chand Kak as the new PM.

In a sign of growing relations between the INC and JKNC, Pandit Nehru, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan attended the annual session of the NC at Sopore from 3-5 August 1945. Pandit Nehru appealed to the people to rally around JKNC and told the Kashmiri Pandits in particular, to "leave Kashmir if you do not want to join NC".[19]

With the Sheikh now enjoying the complete support of Congress, he went back to his old ways of confronting the Maharaja's government. Afzal Beg resigned from the government on 17 March 1946. JKNC tried to exploit the situation, but the PM pre-empted it by appointing Mian Ahmed Yar, the leader of the JKNC, to the Praja Sabha in place of Afzal Beg on 15 April. NC called him a traitor. On 15 May, Sheikh Abdullah, while announcing the launch of the 'Quit Kashmir Movement', openly demanded the repudiation of the Treaty of Amritsar, dissolution of the Dogra rule and urged the Dogras to leave Kashmir. Nehru supported it and castigated the Maharaja for taking stringent steps against the NC. Sardar Patel, who was looking after the affairs of the native states as the Home Minister of the interim Indian government, objected seriously to Sheikh Abdullah launching the 'Quit Kashmir Movement'. Many Congress leaders, including its President, Acharya J. B. Kriplani, criticized the Sheikh for launching this movement and raising a new demand, i.e., the removal of a ruler of a native state. As Abdullah's utterances were getting more vitriolic, he was arrested at Garhi on May 21. Without ascertaining the real facts surrounding Sheikh Abdullah's arrest, Nehru accused the State Government of hot-headedness in dealing with the situation. Sardar Patel expressed his resentment at Nehru's irresponsible statement without ascertaining facts. Nehru realized his mistake and apologized for giving undue publicity to the 'Quit Kashmir Movement'.

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Nevertheless, Pandit Nehru informed the Maharaja that he, along with three of his colleagues, was arriving in Srinagar on 19 June 1946 to arrange for Sheikh Abdullah's defense in his trial scheduled for 21 June. However, the Maharaja, seeing it as undue interference by an outsider into the internal affairs of the state, informed Nehru that his presence in Srinagar would complicate matters further. Accordingly, the Maharaja issued orders banning Nehru's entry into the state without written permission. On reaching Kohala in the evening of 19 June, Nehru was served the order of the District Magistrate, M.K. Dhar. In the meantime, almost everyone condemned Nehru's attitude in defending Sheikh Abdullah.

Nehru's ill-advised action created an embarrassing situation for Congress. Therefore, Maulana Azad, the President of the INC, on 21 June, telegraphically informed Nehru, advising him to return to Delhi. The next day, Nehru left for Delhi, though Asif Ali and his team of lawyers were allowed to proceed to Srinagar to defend Sheikh Abdullah. Sheikh Abdullah's trial started on 28 May, and he was convicted and sentenced to 3 years' simple imprisonment on 10 July.

In the meantime, Lord Mountbatten replaced Archibald Wavell as the Governor General of India, effective March 1947. After Mountbatten took over, events moved at a furious pace, with the announcement of his plan on 3 June 1947 to divide the country, giving just 13 days for a task to divide a territory that consisted of 11 provinces directly ruled by the British and 565 Princely States.

Mountbatten paid a visit to Kashmir between 18-23 June 1947, primarily to convince the Maharaja to accede to Pakistan. However, the meeting ended in failure. Karan Singh writes about the real purpose of Mountbatten's visit in his book, *Heir Apparent*: "Mountbatten, in fact, had come to persuade my father to make up his mind well before 15 August, and had brought an assurance from the Indian leaders that they would not object to his decision in whatever way he thought fit, even if it was the accession to Pakistan".

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Gandhi visited Srinagar from 1-3 August 1947 and seems to have got some assurances from the Maharaja, though no written document exists to support it. The first casualty of Gandhi's visit was the removal of R.C. Kak as the PM. It was believed that the latter had planted in the Maharaja's mind the ambition to become ruler of a sovereign state with friendly relations with Pakistan. To add to the Maharaja's confusion, the family Pandit, Sant Dev, too contributed through his own predictions that the Maharaja was destined to re-establish the Dogra Raj in the same way as his great-grandfather, Gulab Singh, had done. The British Resident in Kashmir, Colonel Webb, had also reported to Mountbatten that the PM of Jammu and Kashmir preferred the State's independence, with close ties to Pakistan. However, Nehru and Sardar Patel had made it abundantly clear that there would be no independent existence of any Indian Princely States after Independence. R.C. Kak was replaced by the old retainer of Maharaja's family, Maj Gen Janak Singh.

Stand Still Agreement

On 1 August 1947, India made it clear that it would execute the 'Stand-Still Agreement' (SSA) with only those states who had already signed the 'Instrument of Accession'. On 12 August, the Maharaja offered to sign the SSA with both India and Pakistan. Pakistan accepted the offer, whereas India invited a representative of the state to Delhi for negotiations. However, when a representative reached Delhi as invited, Nehru refused to meet him as long as Sheikh Abdullah was behind bars. It is quite possible that the accession might have taken place earlier had Nehru not insisted on getting Sheikh Abdullah on board with every decision. Notably, Delhi did sign a standstill agreement with Hyderabad without any such compulsion on 29 November 1947.

Despite signing the SSA with Pakistan, the latter started exerting pressure on the Maharaja to accede to Pakistan by imposing a virtual economic blockade on the State as all major communication systems into the state lay through the road from Kohala and the two rail heads, Rawalpindi and Sialkot. The pressure on the Maharaja to accede to Pakistan was also put by the MC, which on 17

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August 1947, created the 'Pakistan Council' to launch a 'Direct Action' against the State Government. The British, too, sent their officials to Mirpur-Poonch to instigate the people there to demand the State's accession to Pakistan. By the end of August 1947, it seems the Maharaja realised that remaining independent was not realistic any more. On 23 August, having seen the economy of the state strangulated by Pakistan, he requested India to take charge of the State's Post and Telegraph services. This was a clear sign that the Maharaja was now drifting towards India rather than Pakistan.

On 29 September 1947, Sheikh Abdullah and his other colleagues were released under a general amnesty after he gave a written assurance of his loyalty to the Maharaja. Nehru, in the meanwhile, continued to put pressure on the Maharaja to hand over power to Sheikh Abdullah even before the accession had taken place.

Pakistan now carried out regular attacks through its armed gangs, numbering between 300 and 500, right from Kathua in the south to Poonch in the north, indulging in killings and abducting women, to force the Maharaja to accede to Pakistan. Brutal attacks were carried out on the Hindu/Sikh villages of Raipura and Chak Hariya in Samba and areas in and around Poonch, Bhimber, Alibeg, Manavar and Zehri. In a rather brutal attack, Hindus and Sikhs from Rawalpindi, trying to reach Srinagar under the protection of Pakistan soldiers, were mercilessly killed. Earlier, the Raja of Hazara, Mehtar of Chitral, Nawabs of Dir and Mir of Hunza had warned the Maharaja that they would attack the state if the Maharaja acceded to India.

The loyalties of many Muslim officials of the State Armed Forces and its police officers had been subverted. They helped Pakistan dump arms and ammunition in border villages for use during the armed rebellion planned against the Maharaja. Regular training for the use of these arms was conducted in the mosques in Jammu and other places. Fifty percent of the State police force consisting of Muslims had deserted. Similarly, of the 35% of Muslims who comprised the State Forces, most had either deserted or assumed a

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partisan attitude. Whatever was left, was widely scattered over the State's 84,000 sq miles of territory to pose any serious challenge to the dangerous situation created by Pakistan.

In October 1947, the Maharaja, accompanied by the prime minister, personally witnessed the signs of a ruthless massacre of Hindus in Bhimber, Kathua, Kotli and Mirpur, as the dead bodies still lay strewn around when they reached there. In fact, but for the change in their programme of visit to Bhimber, both would have been killed, as the armed gang attacked the Dak Bungalow during the night, where according to the original programme, both were supposed to be halting for the night.

In the middle of October 1947, Hindu/Sikh refugees coming from Abbottabad and Manshera areas reported a concentration of a 6,000-strong group of Waziri and Afridi tribesmen, ready to attack Kashmir. However, Colonel Narain Singh, commanding a unit of the State Forces in Domel-Muzaffrabad-Lohara Gali, was misled by his Muslim officers who termed such information as alarmist rumours. Earlier, it had come to light that Muslim officers manning forward defences on the Manshera Road had been congregating in mosques for secret rendezvous with Pakistan agents. The intelligence agencies suggested to Colonel Narain Singh to withdraw the Muslim elements to Srinagar. However, he rejected the suggestion as he said he had complete faith in them. Specific details of the impending invasion were, however, revealed by Subedar Munnawar Hussain of 4th J&K Infantry to one of his Hindu friends.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to give a detailed account of the 1947-48 Indo-Pak War. Therefore, only some important events, which had a bearing on the events during the end phase of the Dogra Raj, are covered here.

In the opening moves of the war, the raiders, led by the Lohar Gali mutineers, reached Muzaffarabad and Domel during the intervening night of 21-22 October, where the troops of the State forces were completely caught by surprise. Here the Muslim troops of the 4th Battalion of the State Forces joined

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the raiders and killed the remaining troops in their tents. Immediately thereafter, the trucks provided to the invaders by the Pakistan army carried them to Kishen Ganga Bridge without much hindrance. They entered Muzzafarabad without firing a shot. On the morning of 23 October 1947, Colonel Narain Singh was shot dead by his own troops. This ensured that both the roads leading to Srinagar, from Rawalpindi and Abbottabad, were now in the hands of the invaders.

On 22 October 1947, when the Maharaja, along with his PM, arrived in Kashmir, he was confronted by an unprecedented situation of Pakistani-sponsored unprovoked aggression by the raiders. The invasion, named 'Operation Gulmarg', was led by Colonel Akbar Khan, a regular officer of the Pakistan Army, who had assumed the pseudonym of General Jebe Tariq, after the well-known Muslim warrior of Morocco.

The Maharaja summoned the Chief of the State Forces, Brigadier Rajinder Singh, to the presidential palace, where he told the Brigadier that he would personally move to Uri with whatever troops were available to fight the enemy. However, Rajinder Singh dissuaded him from going personally and instead offered to lead the forces himself. The Maharaja finally agreed and ordered Rajinder Singh 'to hold the enemy to the last drop of his blood'.

By evening, Rajinder Singh, with a strength of an assorted company, moved towards Uri with another officer, Captain Prithi Singh. After establishing contact with the enemy, the gallant Brigadier fought many rear-guard operations, despite the enemy's overwhelming numerical superiority. In one such action, he was mortally wounded, but his actions caused a crucial delay for the enemy that eventually saved Kashmir. Brig Rajinder Singh, subsequently, was conferred with the nation's second-highest gallantry award, the *Maha Vir Chakra*.

Under these chaotic circumstances, the Maharaja sent an urgent appeal for military assistance to the government of India, along with an offer of accession

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with the Indian Union. On 26 October, the invaders entered Baramulla, where they indulged in a spree of loot, rape and killing to their heart's content. The nuns of the local church, missionaries-run hospitals, Sikhs and Hindus became the prime targets of their lust and loot. Their purpose of participating in the Jihad having been achieved, many of them collected their loot in whatever means of transport they could lay their hands on and returned to where they had come from.

In the meanwhile, the Defense Committee at New Delhi in its meeting on 24 October 1947, decided to send a delegation under V. P. Menon (others being Army and Air Force officers and D. N. Kachru) to assess the Srinagar situation for themselves. The delegation returned to the Capital on 25 October, where they briefed the Defense Committee on the existing situation. During the meeting, Mountbatten objected to India accepting the request of the Maharaja for military assistance on the plea that the Maharaja had not formally acceded to India. It was, therefore, decided to send V. P. Menon back, this time with the Instrument of Accession. On 26 October, when the Defense Committee met again, the signed Instrument of Accession was presented by Menon in the meeting. Lord Mountbatten tried to delay the decision, but there was little the Governor General could do. However, to create difficulties for India in future, he succeeded in inserting a provision that a plebiscite would be held in the state after normalcy had been restored.

Even after that, the Governor General and the Service Chiefs, all British, expressed their reservations in carrying out such a 'risky' operation with the limited resources available. However, Sardar Patel took a tough stand and said, "Kashmir must be defended at all costs and come what may, resources or no resources, this must be done....".[20]

At the dawn of 27 October 1947, the First Battalion of the Sikh Regiment under the command of Lt. Col. Ranjit Rai was ferried in Dakota planes to Srinagar. As these and additional troops, ferried continuously thereafter, got committed to battle, the raiders were driven out from the outskirts of Srinagar

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and surrounding areas. Baramulla was recaptured on 8th, Mahura on 12th and Uri on 15th of November 1947, respectively. In the mopping-up operations, Tangmarg, Gulmarg, Handwara, Bandipur and other surrounding areas too were recaptured. On the Jammu front, the enemy siege around Mirpur, Bhimber, Kotli, Jhangar and Naushera was lifted by the State Forces by clearing off the raiders between 17-19 November. Similarly, Poonch, too, was recaptured by the end of December 1947.

The most crucial loss that the State suffered in the initial days of the war was that of Gilgit, where Brig Ghansara Singh, who had taken over as the Governor on 1st August 1947, was taken prisoner, and a provisional government was established under local Subedar, Rais Khan, by Major Brown, a British officer. Thereafter, Major Brown and Captain Matheson captured Astore post in a two-pronged attack and killed all the members of the Sikh Unit, except one soldier who managed to escape by crossing the Indus River on a log of wood. In a series of maneuvers, the Pakistan Army, with the help of these two officers, was able to capture a substantial chunk of territory, as the Maharaja had practically no troops available to reinforce these remote and inaccessible areas.

On the political front, it was decided in Delhi to designate Sheikh Abdullah as the Head of Emergency Administration, with Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad as his deputy. Soon thereafter, the Sheikh started issuing ordinances without consulting the Maharaja, even though the law-making powers were still vested with the latter. On Nehru's advice, the Maharaja appointed Sheikh Abdullah as the PM in place of Mehar Chand Mahajan[b] on 1st March 1948 while also appointing four representatives from the State in the Constituent Assembly of India. After the Sheikh was elevated to the post of PM, he started behaving as a powerful Sultan while continuing to enjoy Nehru's patronage.

On 31 December 1947, while the Indian troops were driving back the invaders, Nehru decided to take the case to the U.N. Security Council under

[b] Mehar Chand Mahajan, an outstanding Jurist, had taken over as the prime minister of the State on 5 October 1947. He later rose to the level of Chief Justice of India.

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pressure from Lord Mountbatten without consulting his cabinet. After much deliberation by the U.N. and against the military advice of his field commanders, Nehru accepted the offer of a ceasefire that came into force on 1st January 1949. This ceasefire divided J&K into two parts: the areas under Pakistan's control in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh region, called Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), remained under Pakistan and the remainder of the State with India. Nehru's decision was influenced by Sheikh Abdullah's advice as the latter had calculated that clubbing the ethnically and linguistically dissimilar regions into a single political entity would always be disadvantageous for him. The ceasefire left one-third of the State's territory, consisting of Gilgit, Hunza, Baltistan, Muzaffarabad, Kotli and Mirpur in PoK.

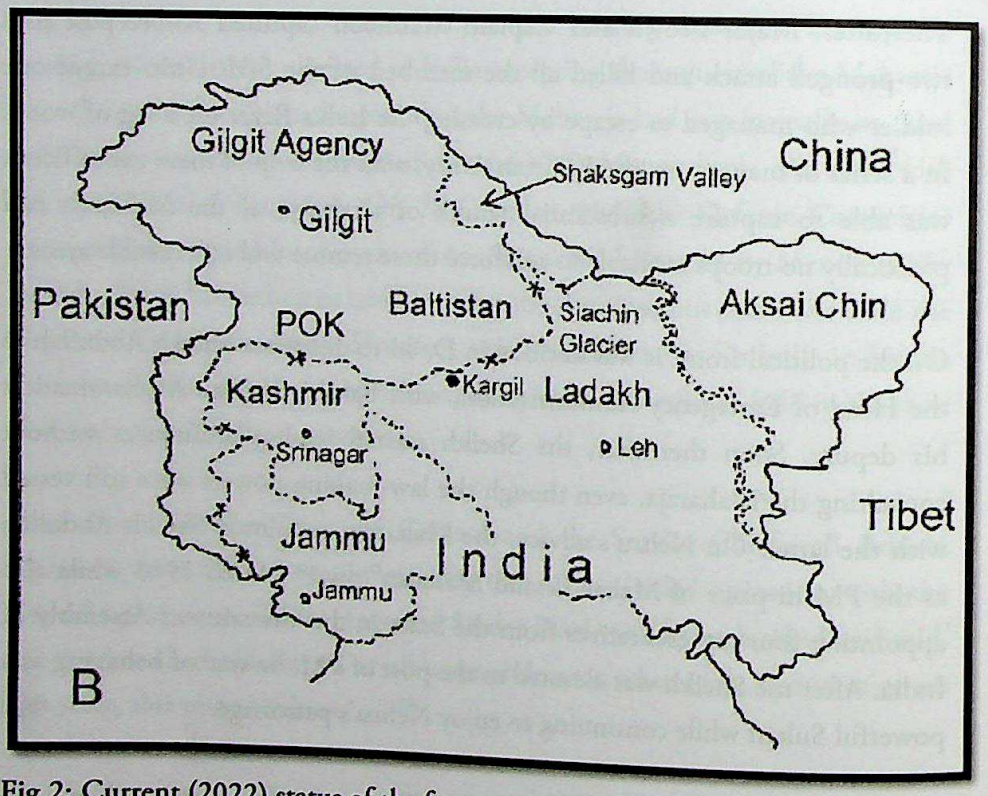

Fig 2: Current (2022) status of the former state. Western one-third of the state is occupied by Pakistan (POK), Aksai Chin in the east is occupied by China and the area of Shaksgam Valley in the north was ceded by Pakistan to China

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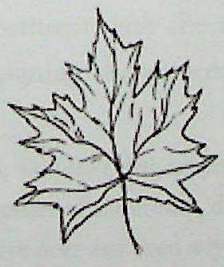
Abdication of the Maharaja

On April 29, 1949, in Delhi, Sardar Patel conveyed to the Maharaja and the Maharani not to return to the State, while Yuvraj Karan Singh would be appointed as a regent during his absence. On 6 May 1949, the Maharaja, through a letter sent to Sardar Patel, reluctantly accepted the latter's suggestion but added, along with other caveats, that he would not abdicate under any circumstances. On 23 May 1949, Sardar Patel wrote back to the Maharaja, assuring him that 'there was no question of his abdication'.

After receiving some assurances from Delhi, on 20 June 1949, the Maharaja effectively handed over all his powers to the Yuvraj. The same day, he left for Bombay, never to return. Maharani left for Kasauli, and Yuvraj Karan Singh returned to Srinagar.

In Oct 1950, the General Council of the NC passed a resolution recommending election to constitute a Constituent Assembly of the State. The inaugural session of the Constituent Assembly, which had 72 out of 75 members of NC elected unopposed, was held on 31 October 1951. On 5 November 1951, it formally adopted an amendment to the Constitution, replacing the Maharaja's rule with that of an elected head of State (*Sardar-e-Riyasat*). On 7 November 1952, Karan Singh, the Prince-Regent, was elected as the first *Sardar-e-Riyasat* and on 17 November 1952, he was formally sworn in.

With this came to an end, the 100-year-old Dogra Raj established by Maharaja Gulab Singh in 1846.



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Chapter 6

KASHMIR-1947: THE INCURSION OF TRIBAL LASHKARS

Kashi N Pandit[a]

For decades, Pakistan termed the Kashmir invasion of 1947 as a spontaneous attack by its people and managed to camouflage the military planning and State role in a brutal invasion. However, a book entitled *Raiders of Kashmir,* written by Major General Akbar Khan of the Pakistan army details the meticulous planning and involvement of Pakistan behind the Kashmir invasion. Pakistani Army prepared a plan called 'Operation Gulmarg' and put it into action as early as 20 August, a few days after Pakistan's independence. According to the plan, 20 *lashkars* (tribal militias), each consisting of 1,000 Pashtun tribesmen, were to be recruited from among various Pashtun tribes, armed and sent to Jammu and Kashmir. On 22 October, thousands of these tribal mercenaries and Pakistan Army regulars invaded the Kashmir Valley overrunning the outposts manned by the State forces in Muzaffarabad and other places as they headed towards Srinagar, their ultimate target.

Seventy-six years ago, on 14 August 1947, a day before the formal announcement of the independence of India and the creation of two Dominions was announced, Hari Singh, the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), signed a standstill agreement with the nascent dominion of Pakistan. However, within 12 days of signing the agreement, Pakistan wrote a warning

[a] The author hails from Baramulla. Besides being under partial siege of the raiders, he was an eye-witness to the fall and recapture of Baramulla during the tribal raid of Kashmir in October 1947. As such, this narrative does not need any documentary evidence.

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note to the Maharaja on 24 August: "The time has come for the Maharaja of Kashmir that he must make his choice and choose Pakistan. Should Kashmir fail to join Pakistan, the gravest possible trouble will inevitably ensue".

Suspecting that the Maharaja planned to accede to the Union of India, Pakistan decided to pre-empt any such action and focused on invading the State and annexing it to Pakistan by force. The story of the secret planning of the contemplated incursion under close supervision of Pakistani army officers has been vividly presented by me in my book *Ten Studies in Kashmir History and Politics.*

Hard-pressed by an incursion with grave consequences, the Maharaja signed the instrument of accession to the Indian Union on 26 October 1947, which paved the way for the Indian troops to land in the state and throw out the raiders. The fighting continued for about a year until at midnight of 31 December 1948, India and Pakistan agreed to a ceasefire. With that was born the Jammu and Kashmir issue which has been hanging fire for three-quarters of a century ever since.

Fig 1: Men of the Qabaili Lashkar riding in a lory towards Srinagar (Unknown photographer)

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Muzaffarabad holocaust

The story of the military operation in J&K against the tribal lashkars has been told by many historians in India, Pakistan and other countries. Each writer has his version. But the real story of what suffering, pain and disaster this incursion brought to the small Hindu and Sikh community of the Valley has not been told in great detail so far. Instead, copious misleading propaganda of so-called communal harmony in Kashmir has been given the media hype for all these seven decades and a half. It is a stupendous distortion of history misrepresentation of facts and a brazen attempt to mislead the unsuspecting readers as well as the new generations of Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims alike

In this narrative, I intend to give some glimpses of the true history of the tribal attack focusing on what befell the Hindu and Sikh communities in the course of tribal savagery and also the subsequent events.

Early in the morning of 22 October 1947, the main column of the raiders, also known as *Qabailis,* crossed Garhi Habibullah and attacked Muzaffarabad. The traitors of the 4 Kashmir Infantry of the State forces, holding the outpost at Lohara Gali (Lohar Kot) and Ramkot, joined the raiders and pased on to them information about the strength and placement of the defendng troops. Muzaffarabad was given over to fire and sword before its sleeping citizens could realize what had happened. A large number of defenseless and innocent Hindus and Sikhs were gunned down in the morning; their females kidnapped, and many of them never to return to their families. Domail, a strategic locality at the confluence of the Jhelum and Kishanganga rivers, fell on the same day. Defenders under the command of Brigadier Rajendra Singh of the State forces delayed the invaders for one full day at Garhi on 23 October before falling back and digging in at Uri late in the evening[1]. The steel bridge on the home side of Uri was blown up in the face of an advancing enemy on the morning of 24 October. After a day-long tough engagement, the handful of survivors had to withdraw to Mahura on the night of 24/25 October and then to Rampur on the night of 25/26 October. Fighting against a numerically far superior enemy,

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Rajendra Singh was killed in action during the wee hours of 27 October 1947 at a place called Dewan Mandir. The remaining, mostly wounded troops, withdrew to Baramulla and then to Srinagar on the night of 26/27 October.

The first-hand and most vivid report of the savagery let loose by the tribal barbarians and their Pakistani handlers on the Hindu and Sikh population of Muzffarabad has been told by Bishember Nath Sapru, a teacher in the State Education Department and posted at Muzaffarabad. After six months in the captivity of the invaders in and around Muzaffarabad, he somehow managed to escape from the clutches of death and arrived in Srinagar after trekking over the Shamsbari mountain range and its forbidding crags for days at end, often shying away from small hamlets enroute and going without even a morsel of food. Dr. Ramesh Tamiri, interviewed him in three long sessions. The 18-page monograph of his interview was published in three instalments of *Kashmir Sentinel* special issue of the year 2007 commemorating the 60th anniversary of the tribal invasion of Kashmir. The grim story sends a shock down the spine.

Below I reproduce a few excerpts from the above monograph to give the readers an idea of the Muzaffarabad holocaust:

> .....Raiders now tried to play deception. They asked the males among Sikhs to come out, telling them, "We have nothing to do with Sikhs". The latter felt relieved, but as they ran back towards the bridge, they found the gate on the other side of the bridge closed. The raiders began firing on them and killed them mercilessly. Then they began kicking the dead bodies down the railing of the bridge into the Kishanganga River.
>
> The raiders then asked the women to segregate themselves from the main crowd. All the females in the age group of 11-45 years were huddled into 30-35 buses, waiting on Kohala side, and were taken to Waziristan etc. Small children in the lap of their mothers were thrown on the road, where they fell victim to starvation or the dogs. The children of once-rich people were now at the mercy of the dogs. Some ladies,

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including Pandit ladies, had painted their faces with mud to escape the lustful eyes of the raiders.

After the attack began, Shamboo Nath Thalchoor, a Sanitary Inspector, had given Strychnine (poison used for killing stray dogs) to his daughter and two Sikh ladies. These Sikh ladies then jumped into Kishanganga. Shamboo Nath Dhar's mother took poison when they were held captive in the local jail. Almost all Pandit ladies, 10-12 in number, and many Sikh ladies had managed to keep themselves away from being huddled into buses. Some of the ladies who escaped jumped to their deaths in the Kishanganga flowing below.

B.N. Sapru managed to escape from the clutches of the raiders and entered the house of a Muslim goldsmith. There were seven men in the house; among them was his friend and collegemate, Ghulam Din Wani. When he tried to formally introduce himself to the group, Wani countered, "You have sucked our blood". They kicked him mercilessly and left him for dead.

Sack of Baramulla

The raiders pressed on. They entered the prosperous town of Baramulla in the morning hours of 26 October. The place was promptly given over to plunder and rapine. Hindus and Sikhs were hunted down and killed, their houses looted and then burnt. Young women were forcibly abducted and carried off to be sold like cattle in the streets of Rawalpindi and Peshawar or to live and die as slaves in the mountain fastness of the distant tribal territory.

The Defense Ministry's report gives this graphic picture of the desolation of Baramulla town:

"Terror stalked the streets of the quaint little town. The inhabitants, Hindus and Sikhs alike, left all their earthly possessions and fled to the hills. The deserted streets lay silent, echoing only to the rattle of the

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raiders' nailed boots as they threaded their way between the corpses strewn around. A thick pall of smoke hung over the ravaged town, and flames from burning houses cast a lurid glare over burnt-out shells of what had been prosperous shops and smiling homes. With many young girls and much treasure now in their possession, the raiders gloated over their good fortune".

With the fall of Baramulla, the strategic entry point of the Valley, the raiders, under the command of Pakistani regular army officers, seized the vast campus of St. Joseph's College and converted it into their operational headquarters. Here on its spacious ground, they held the *jirga* (assembly of elders) in which the Pakistani military officers gave them the plan of attack on Srinagar. We came to know later on that some known Pakistani personalities, including the Faqir of Manki Sharif and the Urdu poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz, fully supporting the incursion of Kashmir, had arrived in Baramulla to boost the morale of the tribal *lashkars.*

Nobody knows the exact number of the tribesmen comprising the invading *lashkars.* After overrunning the highlands between Baramulla and Muzaffarabad, the rapacious highlanders (known in Kashmir history as *Bombas* and *Kashas),* the treacherous looters, and murderers, became their camp followers. Armed with old-type firearms, axes, swords, sticks and other crude weapons, carrying huge Islamic green flags and banners and with green armbands, brandishing whatever weapon they carried, these men raised slogans like *Islam zindabad, Pakistan zindabad* (long live Islam and long live Pakistan) and joined the *lashkars* in hordes.

The worst was that the residents of the town joined the tribesmen in large numbers and quickly developed an Islamic fraternity promising them all the help they needed. The locals also volunteered to serve as their guides since the raiders were not conversant with local topography.

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In Baramulla, the locals provided raiders with a list of prominent Hindu and Sikh personalities. A group of two to three tribesmen accompanied by their guides and a large group of local looters entered their houses. The raiders would go inside a house, and ransack boxes, containers, cupboards, store rooms, kitchens and bedrooms. They were looking for cash and gold. They finished their job quickly and came out. Thereafter, the local looters waiting in the compound of the house swarmed inside like locusts and looted each and everything they found in the house. Before leaving the house in total desolation, the armed tribesmen shot dead the person from among the assembled group after looking up his name in the list that had been provided to them by the locals.

The murderers and looters ravaged street after street and house after house of the Hindu community. Within a few hours of the fall of Baramulla, the destruction of the Hindus was brought about in full. A good number of males in the Hindu community were taken as captives and brought to the campus of St. Joseph's College, while about a hundred young women and girls were locked up in the rooms of the old *tehsil* building of Baramulla. At night, raiders came with candlesticks in their hands to select the younger and more beautiful women for rape and molestation. Reports said that many young girls and women besmeared their faces with soot and charcoal to look ugly and escape molestation.

The treatment meted out to the Sikhs was the worst. In the terminology of the tribesmen, they were *'bal wala kafir'* (the infidel with hair). I will come to that part later on. First, let me briefly describe the personality of the tribesmen. They wore long hair, trimmed near the lower part of the neck, with a longish shirt, baggy shalwar, and a round Afghan cap or a turban. They invariably wore a waistcoat and a necklace of beads. Very few of them had military boots; most were poorly shod with a boot on one foot and a tattered *chappal* on the other. Sometimes some of them wore a straw sandal on one foot and the other foot was bare. But hardy and tough as they were, they walked over ridges, hillocks and uplands with ease and with lightning quickness. Their pockets were stuffed

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with *channa* (Bengal gram), *gur* (jaggery) and dry fruits. Each of them slung a .303 rifle with a belt of bullets, and only a few carried pistols. The atrocities they carried out on the way to Srinagar have few parallels in history. The raid on the convent in Baramulla is narrated in gory detail by Father Shanks, one of the fortunate survivors:

> "The tribesmen—great, wild, black beasts they were—came shooting their way down from the hills on both sides of the town. They climbed over the hospital walls from all sides. The first group burst into a ward, firing at the patients. A 20-year-old Indian nurse, Philomena, tried to protect a Muslim patient whose baby had just been born. She was shot dead first. The patient was next. Mother Superior Aldetrude rushed into the ward, knelt over Philomena and was at once attacked and robbed. The Assistant Mother, Teresalina, saw a tribesman point a rifle at Mother Aldetrude and jumped in front of her. A bullet went through Teresalina's heart. At that moment Colonel Dykes, who had assured us we would not be attacked, raced from his room a few yards along the terrace to get the Mother Superior out of danger, shouting at the tribesmen as he ran. But the Mother Superior fell to a shot, and Colonel Dykes collapsed beside her with a bullet in the stomach. Mrs. Dykes ran from her husband's room to help him. She, too, was shot dead".

Loot and conversion

After the loot of Baramulla, their appetite for loot of the Hindus and Sikhs was sharply whetted. Consequently, from the town of Baramulla, they fanned out in the length and breadth of district Baramulla in scores of groups with two or three tribesmen and hundreds of locals, including the *Bombas* and *Kashas* and others carrying an assortment of crude weapons. They raised Islamic slogans *Allah-o-Akbar* (Allah is great), *Islam zindabad* and then, in the name of Islam, killed, looted and raped the minority community members.

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The planning of expanding their incursion was so perfect that in just one or two days, they traversed the entire district of Baramulla, wherever there was a village with a few houses of Hindus and Sikhs. For example, 35 miles away from Baramulla, the district headquarter, there happened to be a lonely Hindu household in the deep recess of Mawar Valley in Handwara tehsil. When this household was attacked, there were only two tribesmen with guns in their hands and more than three hundred locals who told the tribesmen that the Hindu household was a prosperous one. The saga of loot and spoliation of this unfortunate house, like hundreds of others, begs no description.

In the small town of Handwara, at a distance of about 20 miles from Baramulla, one Pandit administered poison to all the members of his family to escape the atrocities of the tribesmen and their local supporters. When the Hindus in a village were attacked and looted, they were let out on the condition that they converted to the Islamic faith, and the *mullah* (local clergyman) immediately undertook the ritual of converting them. The local mullah and others, most of them earlier so vociferous about *'Sher-e-Kashmir ka kya Irshad, Hindu Muslim Sikh Ittihad'* (what is the message of the Lion of Kashmir [Sheikh Abdullah]? Unity among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs), wasted no time in convincing the newly proselytized about "the grace and benefactions which the new faith would bring them. The mullah, in consultation with the neighbors of the converted Pandit or Sikh, gave him an Islamic name, regulated his attendance in the mosque and began giving lessons in the tenets of Islam. He was told in emphatic words that the incursion of the *mujahids,* meaning the tribesmen, was to eradicate all traces of *'kufr'* (infidelity) from Kashmir. The hapless converted Pandits and Sikhs were quick to endorse the decree, evidently for fear of their life.

The Defense Ministry's publication further observes:

> "Yet in their (tribesmen) success lay the seeds of their doom. For in the savage excitement of looting and raping, the ultimate goal of the 'Holy War' was forgotten. Each man tried to grab as much wealth or as many

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girls as he could and for the moment, refused to be bothered by the 'infidel'. Many raiders, loaded with loot, turned back for home and responded to their officers' expostulations by saying that they would be back soon after depositing their treasure in security. The march on to Srinagar was thus held up for a few days, and those proved crucial".

Each attack on a local Hindu household was followed by general loot of the house, leaving the inmates with nothing but the clothes they wore on their person. Smaller and larger towns fell one after the other as there was not even a policeman not to speak of the troops. It was free for all for the raiders, looters, religious propagandists and mullahs and yelling crowds. People assembled on the streets, raptly listening to the harangues of rabid Islamists telling them that the Pakistani flag had been hoisted atop Hari Parbat hillock (located in Srinagar) and the rule of Islam had been promulgated in the state.

As Muzaffarabad, Domail, Chakothi, Uri and Bonyar fell in succession, refugees fleeing to save their lives made a beeline across the Jhelum Valley (JV) Road and headed towards Srinagar. Some *tongas* (horse carts) and bullock carts carried the beleaguered refugees, the famished Hindus, Sikhs, men, women and children. Some rode bicycles, and others just walked in groups saying not a word but hurrying onwards to the city at whatever speed they could muster. Hindu and Sikh families residing in houses closer to the JV Road left their homes and withdrew to the hinterland to be with a relative or a friend in the hope that the raiders would not turn to them but would march on to Srinagar. That was a wrong assumption. The raiders were brought the information by the locals that Hindus and Sikhs were hiding in their villages, and in this way, any hope of their survival receded. From remote villages, some but not all Hindu families moved to the smaller towns; then from smaller towns to larger ones like Sopor, Baramulla, Handwara, Kupwara, Bandipora, Sumbal and Patan etc. But no town, no village and no hamlet were spared. Selective killing of Hindus took place to strike fear among the entire community.

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How locals behaved

Treatment of locals towards the beleaguered Pandits and Sikhs, in general, was deplorable, although there was an exception here and there. By and large, the locals refused shelter to them, and their supplication was of little avail. Even after declaring that they had embraced the Islamic faith and chanted the *Kalima*, they were not spared. One of the other Quranic verses was cited to justify cold and unsympathetic treatment towards the Hindus. In many cases, the Hindus were killed by known persons to grab their booty in cash and kind.

Nevertheless, in some villages, there were Muslims who remained passive and did not provoke others against the Pandits. Some of them even tried to save their Pandit neighbors, which speaks about their humanitarian disposition.

When the raiders attacked my family in Khwajabagh, a stone's throw from Baramulla town, three of the armed men ransacked our house demanding *zar* (money), which we did not have. They made all of us captives and dragged us to the river bank. The *Vitasta* (Jhelum) flows very near our house. They lined us up along the river bank to shoot us one by one and throw our corpses in the river. As we were dragged to the river bank like encaged half-dead birds, we saw a huge crowd of vandals, armed with crude lethal weapons with green and black armbands tied to their arms, yelling slogans like *Allah o Akbar/Islam zindabad/Pakistan zindabad*. They were carrying looted household items from our home. Even the green vegetables in the kitchen garden were uprooted. Nothing was left intact in the house, so much so that even the fifty-kilogram heavy stone mortar and pestles, too, were looted.

As we stood lined up, about eight or nine members, with eyes fixed on the trigger finger of the tribesmen, one of them hurriedly lowered his gun and moved towards us, demanding *zar*. We said we had none. Then the guy started searching our pockets one by one till he reached the last in the line, my six-year-old brother. He was wearing a tattered shirt and no pajamas at all, not even underpants. His shirt had a small front pocket. The brute searched the

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pocket and found a few grains of roasted corn and one paisa coin. He threw away the grains and slipped the coin into his pocket. He gave the boy a tight slap and rejoined the other two brutes. In the meanwhile, a handful of the elderly Muslims of the village had gathered on the spot led by a prominent person named Rajab Rather. He was a seven feet tall, corpulent person of muscular build. He came close to the three-armed tribesmen and said to them in Urdu: "Khan Sahib, I want to say something. Kindly listen to me. These Hindus have been our neighbors for generations. They are simple, honest and poor people. We shall convert them so that their lives are spared. They are educated and good teachers. We will engage them to teach our boys because we have no teachers in our community". The brutes relented but told them they would make a return visit to ensure that we were converted.

We were allowed to return to our home about 200 yards away. Lo and behold! We did not see even a blade of grass in the house. Only four walls with bare floors greeted us. All of us sat on the mud floor, shivering in the cold of late October in Kashmir.

Lakhshya Gujri, the poor milkmaid living just opposite our house, came over just when it started getting dark. Seeing my mother lying on the mud floor, exhausted and pale with fear, she beat her breast and, holding her by the shoulders, made her sit upright. Her cheeks were wet with tears. She went back to her home and quickly returned carrying a small mud oven, a blackish *pateela* (cooking pot) and a handful of dry twigs. She went back and returned with something bulging out in her rag of a headcloth (*pooch* in Kashmiri), filled the pot with water drawn from the well in our kitchen garden and dropped the contents of her headcloth. These were apples fallen from the trees, which she had collected to be fed to her cows. She boiled about twenty of these apples and wanted to serve us our evening meal, but there was not a single plate on which she could serve. In the outhouse, there was dry grass (winter fodder for our cows). Lakhshya pulled out armfuls of straw and spread it out on the mud floor, and put the boiled apples on the grass for us to eat. Now it was nightfall, and we were exhausted. A person appeared in our compound

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and, standing outside the window, told us that he had brought a message from Rajab Rather–our messiah. The message was that in the morning, a *maulvi* sahib would come to convert us all. He added that Rajab Rather had assured us that no harm would come to us and we would be treated with care. We spent the cold night lying on the grass with nothing whatsoever to cover us. It was a horrendous night.

While attacking Hindu houses and subjecting these to loot and arson, the raiders seeking gold, silver or costly fabrics broke the metallic grips of samovars and copper hooks, mistaking these for gold. But the local looters spared nothing; even pestles and anvils and grinders made of stone were looted from Hindu houses. Books stolen from Hindu houses were torn into pieces and the shreds strewn all over the compound. Green banners with Pakistani insignia were hoisted atop Hindu houses and temples. The Hindus were asked to wear green patches or armbands as a mark of a *kafir* (heretic) to distinguish them from a Musalman.

Hindus hid the pictures of gods and goddesses, which they used to keep in their *puja* (worship) rooms. Idols of deities worshipped every morning were kept hidden from the sight of the tribal raiders. In a large number of cases, the raiders ordered the local crowds to dig up the floors of the rooms on the ground level of Hindu houses because they were told by the locals that Hindus had buried their gold and money and precious articles deep underground.

The raiders moved in private lorries and trucks they had brought with them from their places of origin. But from where they got petrol for these vehicles was not known. Later on, after the recapture of Baramulla, we found that all supplies for the raiders—clothing, foodgrains, packed eatables, fruits, petrol etc. were supplied from Pakistan in special trucks. When the advancing Indian forces pushed back the *lashkars*, the retreating raiders told the locals to loot the stores they were to leave behind. They did not want that the stuff should go into the hands of the Indians. No succor, whatsoever came to the traumatized

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Hindu minority as there was no government and lawlessness had overtaken the land.

Multi-prong attack

Early in October 1947, raids by Muslim ex-servicemen of the State, living in present Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), armed with modern arms and equipment, had been carried out on the State forces' garrisons. The size of these raids had varied from small parties of approximately ten to a hundred. The object of these raids was to pin down the garrisons of the State army and also to serve as a ploy for the main push along the Kohala-Srinagar Road. The raids had served their purpose well, for they had led to a large-scale uprising of the turbulent Muslims on the Poonch and Mirpur borders, which were supplied arms and ammunition by the raiding forces.

By 15 October, the raiders had penetrated Poonch and Mirpur, encircling some of the State force garrisons and destroying others. The Muslim components of J&K troops in the Poonch-Mirpur sector had deserted on 18 October with their arms and ammunition and joined the raiders. A few days later, the hostiles had made their main push along the Kohala-Srinagar Road. When the main push had been in progress, all garrisons in Poonch and Mirpur had been encircled.

The weak and isolated garrisons carried on a heroic, though the unequal, struggle against heavy odds. Three brigades had been deployed in the Poonch, Mirpur and Jammu sectors. Bhimber had fallen at 0400 hours on 28 October. The ring around Mirpur was tightening and Kotli was heavily besieged. The Military Advisor to the State appealed to the Government of India on 28 October for air support but nothing happened. On 2 November, the State Prime Minister Mehar Chand Mahajan made a fervent appeal to Nehru to save the state garrisons and thousands of refugees from being massacred. Nehru's priority was Srinagar and the Valley. General Bucher, officiating C-in-C of the Indian Army was not prepared to relieve Poonch and Mirpur garrisons at the

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cost of the Valley. However, some air action did ensue from 3 November. Mendhar fell on 7 November, and the threat to Poonch town increased. Notwithstanding sporadic air strafing, the situation worsened.

Rajouri massacre

After the fall of Mendhar, Rajouri was captured by the enemy. The number of Hindus and Sikhs killed, wounded and abducted was reported to be 30,000. The massacre of Hindus in Rajouri took place on *Diwali*. Ever since, the Hindu inhabitants of Rajouri have not been celebrating the *Diwali* festival in memory of those who were butchered in cold blood by the raiders. About fifteen hundred refugees at Chingas were also reported to have been slaughtered. Jhangar was besieged and Nowshera was threatened. The State troops evacuated Rawalakot and arrived at Poonch with 6,000 refugees. The tiny garrison at Beri Pattan was attacked and the bridge was damaged. Garrisons at Mirpur and Kotli were under tremendous pressure. On 12 November, the States' Prime Minister Mahajan made a moving appeal to the Defense Minister of India to come to the rescue of the beleaguered people of the western region of Jammu province. Another day passed when Uri was recaptured on 13 November by the Indian troops. Then only did New Delhi turn to the situation in the Poonch-Rajouri sector. But Mirpur was lost.

With the fall of Mirpur, Bagh, Kotli and Muzaffarabad (which was the first to fall), thousands of Hindu and Sikh refugees from the entire region had to flee their homes carrying with them barely a few clothes to cover their bodies and nothing else. The towns and localities which fell in the hands of raiders were cleansed of Hindus and Sikhs; thousands were massacred or wounded and thousands landed in Jammu as refugees. The exact number of Hindu and Sikh women abducted and taken away by the raiders will never be known. Unconfirmed reports said that most of them were converted and forcibly married to Muslims. But there are confirmed reports that many Hindu and Sikh girls jumped from Kohala Bridge into the gushing waters of Jhelum and perished while saving their modesty. There are also reports that many Hindu

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and Sikh women were abducted, forcibly converted and kept as slaves. Most of the Hindu and Sikh refugees who could save their lives arrived in Jammu and were put up in refugee camps.

The story of the siege of Poonch is one of the great sagas of military heroism and gallantry with hardly a parallel in military history. How Brigadier Pritam Singh saved Poonch town from falling into the hands of the enemy is etched forever in the memory of the survivors.

The Hindu and Sikh refugees from Pakistan-occupied parts of J&K have been doubly unfortunate. The State government did not recognize them as state subjects and argued that they were migrants from other parts of Punjab who came to Jammu. Here it is pertinent to note that many Hindus and Sikhs who fled their homes in Muzaffarabad, Domail, Chinari and Chakothi right up to Uri had fled their homes and come to Srinagar in search of shelter. But Sheikh Abdullah, then Chief Administrator of the State, pushed them out of Srinagar, imagining their presence in the Valley would lead to a change in the demographic complexion of the Valley. These unfortunate refugees had been denied state subjecthood for a very long time. It was only on 5 August 2019 that the Indian government finally got the J&K Restructuring Bill passed by the Indian Parliament, which entitled these refugees to their rightful claim.

Reclaiming the Valley

The position on the evening of 29 October was still grave. One Commissioned officer and 11 other ranks had been martyred, and many more wounded while resisting the raiders at Baramulla. Lt. Col. D. R. Rai, holding back the raiders near Pattan, 5 kilometres east of Baramulla, signalled to Delhi, "500 enemy and 2,000 locals near Baramulla cannot be held by State forces, so will undertake the task". Baramulla had fallen, and refugees in thousands were seen moving towards Srinagar city. Rai was fatally hit by a bullet. He was the first recipient of the *Maha Vir Chakra*. He was a key soldier responsible for holding off the raiders from reaching Srinagar city.

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On 3 November, the historic battle of Budgam was fought when the raiders numbering upwards of 700, tried to sneak in and control Srinagar airport. The Kumaon Regiment fought gallantly, suffered many casualties but repulsed the enemy attack inflicting heavy casualties on it to the tune of several hundred killed and as many wounded. Another gallant son of the motherland, Major Somnath Sharma, commanding the Kumaon force sent this historic last message to the headquarters before laying down his life "Fighting the enemy with bayonets; the enemy is only 50 yards from us. We are heavily outnumbered. We are under devastating fire. I shall not withdraw an inch but will fight to the last man and the last round".

The next day, 4 November, Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Patel and Defense Minister Sardar Baldev Singh flew to Srinagar to observe things on the spot and to study the situation. They returned to Delhi the same evening and impressed on the Cabinet the need for further urgent reinforcements.

Brigadier L. P. Sen wanted the raiders to congregate in one place. To achieve that, he lured them to the outskirts of Srinagar, and in the battle of Shalateng fought on 7 November a decisive and crushing defeat was inflicted on the enemy. Brigadier Sen's strategy of encircling them on three sides worked wonders. "The Royal Indian Air Force strafed them from the air. Kumaon troops fired with their bayonets flashing. Stunned, the raiders ran helter-skelter; hundreds fell to the concentrated fire. Within twenty minutes, the battle of Shalateng was over, and the enemy started fleeing desperately along the road to Baramulla, leaving behind their lorries and dumping ammunition and supplies. The raiders fled in panic, leaving behind about 500 of their dead on the ground".

Baramulla recaptured

This battle denied Kashmir to Pakistan forever. Around 13.30 hours on 8 November, Indian troops recaptured the town of Pattan, midway between Srinagar and Baramulla. By 1600 hours, Brigadier Sen and 1 Sikh and 1

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Kumaon entered Baramulla triumphantly. The raiders had fled the town leaving behind huge supplies and stores, which the fleeing tribesmen had exhorted the local Muslims to loot and not allow to fall into the hands of advancing Indian troops. By the evening of 13 November, Uri was recaptured, and the threat to the Valley receded.

It is interesting to recount the swiftly changing mood of Kashmiri Muslims in the wake of the recapture of the Valley. The Islamic spirit of domination and aggression, which had become dangerously vibrant and was reflected pervasively in its harshest form from 26 October to 8 November (14 days) in the past against the small and defenseless Hindu and Sikh population of the Valley, changed quickly to that of remorse and fraternity, once the gun-wielding tribal invaders were humbled. As the news of the recapture of Baramulla spread across the district, villagers who had forced conversion on Hindus beseeched them to return to their original faith and resume their normal cultural life, forgetting what had befallen them only recently. But no villager was prepared to return an iota of their looted property. This exposes the abject deceptive treatment of the Hindus and Sikhs by the majority community in general.

The Muslims spoke conciliatory words to the Hindus, attributing the catastrophe to the intervention of divine powers (not the puritanical *Momin's*). In some places, Muslim neighbors indeed were very generous and offered something by way of small succor to their traumatized Hindu neighbors.

Sheikh's administration

When the fighting situation in the Valley eased a little and normal activity was resumed, the government of the state, now led by the Chief Administrator (that was his designation then), Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, tried to put together the nuts and bolts of a civil administration. The primary issue was that of thousands of refugees, the entire Hindu and Sikh community of district Baramulla of those days and the flocks of refugees who had sought shelter after

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fleeing Muzaffarabad. They were shelterless and destitute, having lost everything in life. Liaison Committees were constituted whose members visited Baramulla and other towns exhorting people to maintain communal harmony. The Muslims responded with as much fervor as they had responded to the raiders. The Sheikh administration ordered that the looted property be returned to the Hindus and Sikhs and *mohalla* (neighborhood)-committees were formed to supervise and take into its custody the recovered property and then hand it back to the Hindus who identified their belongings.

Yes, huge dumps of looted property were raised close to the houses of the Hindus at an open place in the *mohallas*. But what were its contents? Just empty boxes and items that were of no value. Members of the committee supervising the recovery of the looted property asked the Hindus to give a written and duly signed statement that they had received all their looted goods intact and in original condition. The Pandits could not but oblige.

Authoritarian rule

Nehru handed over the control of the State to Sheikh Abdullah and his NC. Overnight, the Sheikh became the undisputed chief and the power hub of the State. With the ouster of the raiders from Uri after fierce fighting, civil administration in Kashmir under Sheikh Abdullah came into motion. During the raid, he had sent his family to Indore to remain secure. But tasting absolute power and supported by Nehru, the Sheikh lost no time in adopting an arbitrary and dictatorial attitude. He and his party began massive propaganda that NC had saved Srinagar and also the minority community during the days of the attack. Nothing was far from the truth. He would not name a single army commander who had laid down his life. But he had all praise for Maqbool Sherwani of Baramulla, who was given credit for some machinations that contributed to delaying the advance of the raiders.

And such was the blitzkrieg of propaganda that Indian civil society, including Congress leadership and Nehru, began to believe in what was not at all the

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truth. Autocratic and arbitrary acts of the Sheikh after assuming power will be found in detail in the official letters written by Maharaja Hari Singh to Sardar Patel. Looted, vandalized and traumatized Hindus and Sikhs were left to their fate, and they fended for themselves in misery and destitution. They laughed when the slogan of communal harmony was brandished before them. It was the biggest joke in Kashmir's history. And even today, the remnants of this canard persist. But of course, there were stray cases in which local Muslims did show empathy with the victimized minority community.

Though Uri had been recaptured by the Indian troops and some advance was also made in the Poonch-Rajouri sector, the most significant battles of Jhangar and Naushera were won in January and February 1948. Brigadier Mohammed Usman, known as the 'Lion of Naushera', was instrumental in defeating a much larger force of the tribals. While defending a counterattack by the Pakistan army, he attained martyrdom on 3 July 1948.

From February to May 1948, the raiders tried to re-enter the Valley from the Teethwaal region. They had reached as far as Handwara town, which fell quickly and from where they could launch an attack on Sopore, and if successful, they would cut off the Srinagar-Uri vital link of the JV Road. This supplementary incursion of the tribesmen forced the vast Hindu population of the area in Handwara, Wadipora, Magam, Kupwara, Trehgam, Shuler and Sonamul etc., to abandon their homes and run for shelter to Sopore. This is called the second 1947- 48 migration of the Hindu population of district Baramulla.

The plight of the Hindus in this migration was no less pathetic and miserable. Once they left their homes, the local Kashmiris swarmed like locusts and once again looted whatever was left of their property. Many isolated Hindu houses were set on fire. There was no succor from the government, and they had to fend for themselves wherever they could hide—in Sopore or Baramulla or Srinagar. It was only after Indian troops captured Kupwara and Teethwaal and Shulur that the displaced persons returned to their villages. All that the state

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government was doing with careful alacrity was to give hype to false communal harmony in the Valley. Not a single person who had indulged in loot, arson, burglary or worked as a guide to the raiders was touched by the law of the land. No punitive action was taken against the looters, vandals and miscreants. Their crimes were overlooked for being previously oppressed during the Maharaja's regime.

The real rulers of Kashmir now were the NC leaders and their supporters who had created a sort of parallel administrative institution. Ghulam Qadir Masala of Sopore, a senior NC leader, behaved like the governor of District Baramulla, dictating orders to the Deputy Commissioner, Raghunath Mattoo. The government's whole-hearted attention was focused on the local Muslim population. Nobody talked about the Hindu and Sikh minority that had suffered the worst type of tyranny, oppression and loot. In a state of great misery and destitution, the Hindus of Baramulla district eked out a miserable living.

Then around the 18th of November 1947, Nehru paid a visit to Baramulla. NC gathered together a crowd of people to be addressed by Nehru. More than assuaging the feelings of the outraged victims of the raid, he eulogized the Sheikh with all the force of oratory at his command. He was not prepared to listen to some young men from among the Hindu community in the crowd he was addressing. One young Hindu boy stood up and then, in a loud voice addressing Nehru, said he wanted to say some truths about the event. The NC goons sitting in the crowded audience swooped on him as eagles swoop on prey, gagged his mouth and pulled him away from the crowds. He was not to be seen anymore. Nehru had travelled from Delhi to tell the small gathering in Baramulla that their existence depended on their servility to the Sheikh—the same Sheikh whom he sent behind bars six years later.

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Chapter 7

POST-INDEPENDENCE KASHMIR

Bansi Lal Kaul

Accession of Jammu & Kashmir

The accession of the State of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) to India, supported by the constitutional authority of the Maharaja and politically and emotionally by the majority of the people of Kashmir, was the greatest triumph of Indian nationalism after Independence. It was Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah who led Kashmir's accession to India. However, he could not have succeeded if the Kashmiri mind had not been what it was. It was because of the inherent qualities of the Kashmiri mind that they responded to the ideological appeal of Nehru and the moral appeal of Gandhi. The ignorance and distrust shown by the Pakistani rulers, in sharp contrast to the empathy of the Indian leaders, pushed Kashmir to join the Indian Union.

Furthermore, Pakistan, without any provocation or justification, had sent armed raiders under the control of a senior army officer into Jammu and Kashmir to grab it by force. The invasion resulted in total chaos and confusion and upset the people of the state beyond description. The invasion not only traumatized a previously well-settled and peaceful Kashmir society, it also set a disastrous pattern for India-Pakistan relations.

After landing at Srinagar, the Indian army immediately took up the task of protecting the airport and the security of the people in the capital Srinagar and other parts of the Valley. The marauders were hounded out of the Valley by a series of tactical engagements in the shortest possible time. Advancing to Muzaffarabad, the Indian army came up against Pakistani regular troops as a

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body intermixed with the deserters of the Maharaja's forces (exclusively Muslims) and ex-army men of the British Indian army, especially west of Uri and Teetwal.

British commanding officers initially refused the entry of Pakistani troops into the conflict, citing the accession of the state to India. Later, however, in May 1948, they relented and Pakistan's army entered the war shortly afterwards. Earlier on November 25, 1947, the marauders had entered Mirpur city and indulged in the massacre of Hindu and Sikh residents and refugees from the surrounding areas. Out of a population of 75,000 Hindus and Sikhs in the Mirpur district, hardly 2,500 could escape and reach Jammu. Meanwhile, the Pakistan army, with the help of collaborating British army officers, usurped vast areas of the state, including Gilgit, Baltistan, Diamir, Ghizer and Ghamche and some parts of Ladakh. The war continued till the ceasefire became operative on January 1, 1949, with the intervention of the United Nations. It left 84,000 square km of the state's area under the occupation of Pakistan. It goes to the credit of the Indian army that before the ceasefire, it had completely cleared the Valley of the invaders and Leh, Kargil and parts of Ladakh were won back. In Jammu, the town of Poonch was freed and control was established over the area between it and Rajouri[1].

It is important to mention here that at a meeting of the Governor Generals Mountbatten and M. A. Jinnah in November 1947 at Lahore, the former offered to resolve the Kashmir issue by getting the verdict from the people. Replying to the Mountbatten formula, Jinnah stated that "a plebiscite was undesirable". Actually, he feared that the people of the State would not vote for Pakistan in the presence of Indian troops and with Sheikh Abdullah in power[2]. Unable to resolve the issue with Pakistan, India lodged a complaint about Pakistan's aggression with the United Nations on January 1, 1948. In its resolution of August 13, 1948, the U.N. Commission for India and Pakistan, appointed by the Security Council, recommended the withdrawal of Pakistani troops, tribesmen and other Pakistani Nationals from the state as a pre-

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requisite for holding a plebiscite. Pakistan has not done so to this day and has been harping on holding a plebiscite that it had refused earlier.

Sheikh Abdullah Forms Popular Government

Initially, Sheikh Abdullah took over as head of the Emergency Administration of the truncated state on October 30, 1947, with Meher Chand Mahajan still as Prime Minister. When this arrangement did not work, Mahajan was made to resign. Maharaja's administration had completely broken down, and the National Conference Party filled the administrative vacuum. The NC workers not only made up the 23 Member Emergency Council but were also appointed as government officials. The state was still governed by the J&K Constitution Act of 1933, which had no provision for emergency. On taking over, the Abdullah administration was faced with a very difficult situation. The closure of Jhelum Valley Road, which connected the Valley with Muzaffarabad and Pakistani Punjab, resulted in a shortage of essential commodities in the winter months and even later. The Pakistan government had stopped the supply of rock salt, sugar and petrol etc., even during the Maharaja's rule, and the meagre stocks available were withheld by the unscrupulous hoarders. To top it off, the poor production of local rice crops made things even more difficult for the people. The winter season of 1947-48 was a very difficult period for all people in the Valley, particularly the poor.

The state government tried its best to procure essential commodities from the neighboring Punjab State through Banihal Cart Road. Unfortunately, early snowfall closed the road and stopped the procurement process. In the absence of the availability of rice, the common people started eating bread made from wheat and maize flour and subsequently boiled potatoes and cooked dried beans. Non-availability of salt resulted in deficiency-related diseases. There was also a shortage of medicines. The spring and summer of 1948 were equally difficult for the poor people of the Valley. It was only after the Government of India started supplying rice imported from Burma that the food situation in Kashmir eased.

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On March 5, 1948, Maharaja Hari Singh appointed a Council of Ministers headed by Sheikh Abdullah as Prime Minister. The council of ministers started working in earnest, and the people of the state heaved a sigh of relief. Accession to India meant the dawn of democracy for the people of the state. The state government launched many programs for the benefit of the people. Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues had a dream of building the "*Naya Kashmir*" (new Kashmir)—a welfare state for the people of J&K.

Fig 1: Sheikh Mohamad Abdullah addressing the first public gathering at Lal Chowk in Srinagar with Jawahar Lal Nehru looking on

In 1948, the Abdullah government got busy with making efforts to solve the urgent problems facing the state following the transfer of power. However, these efforts were hampered by the first fissures in the monolithic politics of the NC when the legendary leader of the Quit Kashmir movement, Ghulam Mohiuddin Karra, parted company with Sheikh Abdullah. Karra resented the number two position given to Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad in the party and the government and ignored his contribution to fighting the autocratic rule of

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the Maharaja. Later on, in June 1953, Karra formed a new pro-Pakistan party called Political Conference. That gave a setback to Sheikh Abdullah.

After the U.N.-mediated ceasefire between India and Pakistan, the state government got busy with the consolidation of the territory under its control. Some more important developments, like the settlement of displaced people of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, also started to take place. Soon after the ceasefire, Pakistan arbitrarily ceded some territory to China over which India still had sovereignty—a claim accepted by the Security Council's resolution of August 1948.

Maharaja Hari Singh, with whom Abdullah had an uneasy relationship, abdicated in favor of his son Karan Singh making him the Regent on June 9, 1949, and he left the state, never to return again. Also, under pressure from Sheikh Abdullah for the provision of greater autonomy for J&K, the Indian Constituent Assembly adopted Article 370 of the Constitution. While it was welcomed by the people of Kashmir, the people of Jammu opposed it. On November 20, 1951, the Interim Constitution of the state came into effect. After that, things started moving fast.

Changes in the educational system were also initiated. The state did not have its own university, and all exams were conducted by the Punjab University in Lahore before the partition and the Punjab University on the Indian side after the partition. The Sheikh Abdullah administration understood the need for the state to have its own university. Thus, the University of J&K came into being with Mr. Ashai as the first Registrar. Similarly, changes in other sectors like public health, justice, public works, public distribution system, law and order and social welfare started taking place.

J&K state was the first in the country which legislated agrarian reforms. Historical legislation called 'The Jammu and Kashmir Big Landed Estate Abolition Act', was passed in 1950. It declared that no proprietor should at any time hold more than 182 *kanals* (about 23 acres) of land in ownership.

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Similarly, it provided a ceiling for the tiller by declaring that no tiller to whom land has been transferred shall at any time hold more than 160 *kanals* (20 acres) of land in ownership rights. The rights and interests in the land exceeding the ceiling were extinguished and went to the state[3]. The object of the above Act was not to abolish landlordism altogether, as the Act allowed the landlords to cultivate the land through the tenants provided the land was within the ceiling area. It is important to add here that the Act did not have any provision for compensation to the landlords. The Act overnight made a large majority of landless tillers owners of the land they had tilled for generations. With this Act, the already popular Sheikh Abdullah became a Messiah—a liberator. His popularity among the rural poor in Kashmir touched the sky. It, however, alienated the influential landlord class. They felt that their livelihood had been snatched without compensation.

Fig 2: The three architects of 'Naya Kashmir'; from left G. M. Sadiq, Bakshi Ghulam Mohamad and Sheikh Abdullah discussing some important issue

Jammu Agitation

When Sheikh Abdullah took over, it meant the transfer of power from a Jammu-based ruler to a Kashmir-based leadership. The Kashmiri leadership did not make any effort to understand the minds of the people of Jammu. As a

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matter of fact, the Kashmiri leadership ignored the basic aspirations of the people of Jammu, and there was a simmering discontent among them. Fuel was added to it by the loose talk by some NC leaders who openly declared that they were in favor of reversing the 100 years of "Dogra Raj". Although the Jammu region represented 45 percent of the population as against 53 percent of the Valley, there was only one representative from the Jammu region in a cabinet of five. The ruling party did not include even a single important office bearer in its hierarchy from the Jammu region. The inclusion of Article 370 in the Indian Constitution and the possibility of holding a plebiscite and the Muslim majority of Kashmir voting against India created doubts and fear in the minds of the people of Jammu.

In November 1947, soon after the Pakistani invasion, the *Praja Parishad* Party was founded in Jammu. Balraj Madhok was a key organizer of the Party. In early 1949, the Parishad started protesting against the Sheikh Abdullah government. The agitation was suppressed, and Balraj Madhok was externed. The Parishad's call for full integration with India, like other Princely states, clashed with the demands of the National Conference for complete autonomy of the state. Sensing trouble, the Indian leaders intervened and arranged a temporary truce. However, simmering tensions came to the fore again in the elections to the J&K Constituent Assembly in 1951.

The Parishad initially contested 28 out of 30 seats allocated to Jammu in the 1951 elections. However, the nomination papers of 13 were rejected on the grounds of technicalities. Sensing that the elections were being railroaded by the ruling NC, the Parishad announced a boycott of the elections shortly before the polling. Consequently, all the NC candidates were declared elected from the Jammu Province. Thus, obstructed from democratic participation, the Parishad took to the streets, organizing protests. Calling for full integration of the state with the rest of the country, the Parishad issued a rallying cry, '*Ek Vidhan, Ek Nishan, Ek Pradhan*' (One Constitution, One Flag and One Premier). This was in marked opposition to the state trying to formulate its

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own constitution, carrying its own flag and calling its executive head as the 'Prime Minister'.

On January 15, 1952, students staged a demonstration against the hoisting of the state flag alongside the Indian Union flag. The army was called out, and a 72-hour curfew was imposed. Consequently, Gopalaswamy Ayyengar, the Indian Cabinet Minister in charge of Kashmir Affairs, came to Jammu to broker peace. This action was, however, resented by Sheikh Abdullah. In order to break the constitutional deadlock, the 'Delhi Agreement' was formulated in 1952 to settle the applicability of the Indian Constitution to the state. Following this, the state Constituent Assembly abolished the monarchy and adopted an elected Head of the State called *Sadr-i -Riyasat.* However, the Assembly was slow to implement the remaining measures agreed upon in the Delhi Agreement.

The Parishad took up a civil disobedience campaign again in November 1952. It led to repression by the state government. The Parishad accused Abdullah of sectarianism favoring the Muslim interests in the state and sacrificing the interests of others. The Jana Sangh joined hands with other parties, such as Hindu Mahasabha, Akali Dal and Ram Rajya Parishad, to launch a parallel agitation in Delhi.

The state government, soon after coming to power, had started an Entry-Pass system for non-state subjects and outsiders at Lakhanpur. This was opposed by Jan Sangh and other national parties. In May 1953, Syama Prasad Mukherjee, a towering National leader, made a bid to enter J&K at Lakhanpur without a permit, citing his rights as an Indian citizen to visit any part of the country. J&K government prohibited his entry, and he was promptly arrested and taken to Srinagar. Following his arrest, an estimated ten thousand activists were imprisoned in Jammu, Punjab and Delhi, including some Members of Parliament. While in custody, he got sick and was provisionally diagnosed with a heart attack and shifted to a Srinagar hospital but died a day later on June 23,

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1953. His death created a furor, and his party Jana Sangh said that a Nehru-Sheikh conspiracy had led to his death[4].

Feeling weary of the Parishad agitation following the death of Mukherjee and resurfacing from the political wilderness of G. M. Karra, in June 1953, Sheikh Abdullah started showing signs of disturbance of equilibrium. In order to steal the thunder of the new challenge created by the emergence of Karra, he started making anti-center noises and advocating for independence. In his public speeches, he openly spoke of breaking away from India to establish an independent Kashmir. It was alleged that he had started hobnobbing with American diplomats and politicians who favored an independent Kashmir for its strategic importance against the Soviet Union. The rise of Karra, who continued to swear by Gandhian values and even proved his credentials in his speeches, also perturbed him[5].

During the rule of Sheikh Abdullah from October 1947 to August 1953, a number of developments resulted in the rupture of the emotional bond between Kashmir and India and he was mainly responsible for such a shift. Following the fallout of four of the five cabinet ministers who expressed no confidence in him, the *Sadr-i-Riyasat* Karan Singh dismissed him on August 9, 1953. The hero of the state and kingpin of India's Kashmir policy was detained indefinitely and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed took over as the Prime Minister.

Bakshi Takes Over

Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad, Deputy Prime Minister in Sheikh Abdullah's Cabinet, was sworn in as Prime Minister on August 9, 1953, in tense circumstances as the news of the dismissal and arrest of the latter had spread like wildfire. He retained all the ministers of the previous government with the exception of Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg, who was also detained. Some of the bureaucrats known to be close to the Sheikh, including his son-in-law Ghulam Mohammad Shah, were also arrested. On the same day, crowds of protesters in large numbers passed through the streets of Srinagar shouting slogans in favor

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of their loved hero *Sher-i-Kashmir* Sheikh Abdullah condemning the action of the Indian government. The protests and agitations continued for several days and mobs turned violent in many places. The police and military had to resort to *lathi*-charge and firing to control the mobs resulting in several deaths and injuries.

In his address, Bakshi announced a number of measures that his government was going to take up immediately. These included free education for all from school to the postgraduate level, subsidized ration through the public distribution system, free treatment in government hospitals and scrapping of the compulsory *Lagaan* or tax in kind involving parting with a percentage of produce from farmers. In addition, he announced the starting of city bus services in Srinagar and Jammu at just one *anna* (1/16 of a rupee) per passenger. The announcement of these measures was welcomed by one and all. The popular city buses charging just one anna (called *Poond* in Kashmiri) earned them the nickname of *Poonda-Bus* in Srinagar.

Bakshi proved to be an able administrator and is remembered as an architect of modern J&K because of his constructive work in the state. His rule also saw the formulation of the Constitution of J&K and a normalization of relations with the Indian Government. Demanding and getting liberal grants from the center, he set the state on the road to progress, gave a practical shape to his ideas with action and earned fame and goodwill at home and outside Kashmir. He had the unique quality of establishing a direct rapport with the masses using his wit and humor. He had a vision and created new vistas of education, health and social welfare in the state. During his time, a medical college, an engineering college, two colleges of the Indian system of medicine, two agriculture colleges, a number of degree colleges and polytechnic colleges were opened. A number of post-graduate courses were started, initially in arts subjects and later in science subjects, by the University of J&K. Roads were widened in the capital cities of Srinagar and Jammu and new roads were built in the rural areas. New residential colonies, both in Jammu and Srinagar, came up during his time. In the agriculture and horticulture sectors, too, there was

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progress. Tourism got a boost with his attractive policies. He encouraged social and cultural programs and invited film actors and singers to entertain people. To facilitate cultural activities, Tagore Hall in Srinagar and Abhinav Theatre in Jammu were built. There was fast growth of the transport sector, and an industrial estate came into being. The famous Jawahar tunnel was constructed through the Pir Panjal Mountain Range and it shortened the distance between Srinagar and Jammu. Plots at cheap rates and easy instalments were allotted to employees and thus came up Jawahar Nagar, Balgarden and Narsingarh colonies in Srinagar and Bakshi Nagar and Gandhi Nagar colonies in Jammu. During his time, hydroelectric power plants at Ganderbal in Kashmir and Chenani in Jammu came up. These helped to relieve the power shortage to some extent. As is obvious, there was an all-around visible change and progress during over ten years of the mostly peaceful Bakshi's rule.

In 1956 Bakshi invited Soviet leaders Khrushchev and Bulganin to Kashmir during their visit to India. They readily agreed and were given a rousing welcome by the people. In their speeches, the two leaders categorically declared, "The question of Kashmir as one of the states of India has already been decided by the people of Kashmir". In his typical jovial manner, Khrushchev, pointing towards the Himalayas that surround the Valley, said in his speech, "If you want any help from us, just call from those mountains; we are living just across them, and we will come to help you".

However, there were also some negative aspects of Bakshi's rule. In order to remain in power, elections were rigged. He also encouraged muscle power and used the police to silence his critics. There was nepotism and widespread corruption visible in all spheres of life. In the education sector, admissions to educational and technical institutions were not made on merit. A policy had been devised right from Sheikh Abdullah's time that 70% of seats should be reserved for the majority Muslim community and only 30% for all the other minority communities. He did not change this discriminatory policy which hit the Kashmiri Pandit community the most. Denial of seats in medical and

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engineering colleges affected the careers of well-deserving and meritorious Pandit students.

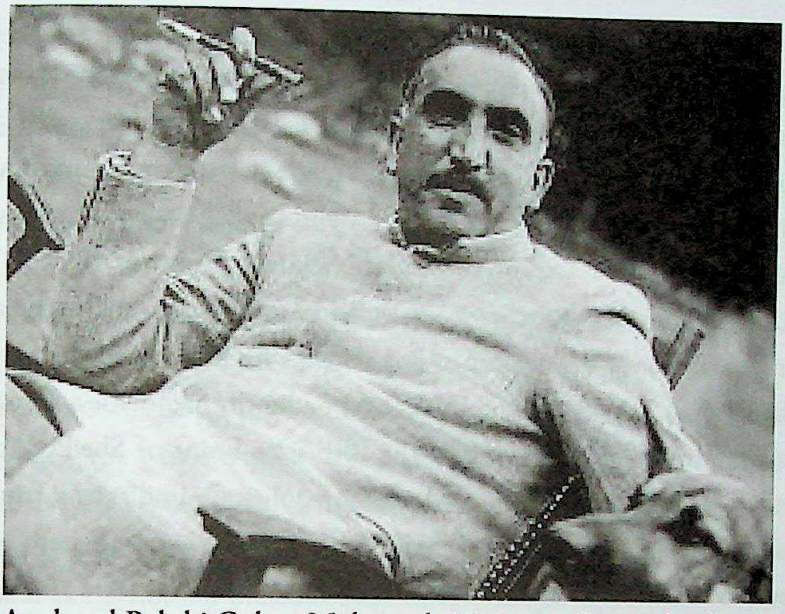

Fig 3: A relaxed Bakshi Gulam Mohamad. He gave a flip to the development process of modern Jammu & Kashmir State after taking over as its Prime Minister in 1953

During Bakshi's rule, some ill-advised steps were taken which were not environment friendly. The forests nourished and protected by the Dogra rulers were thrown open to vandalism and the wildlife which had thrived was exposed to poaching. The policy of leasing forests led to their loot by unscrupulous lessees. They indulged in felling trees illegally on a large scale. Deforestation led to the biodegradation of the Kashmir Himalayas, loss of habitat for precious wildlife, soil erosion and uncontrolled floods. However, it goes to his credit that he formulated and implemented a plan for dredging of river Jhelum from Khadanyar near Baramulla, upstream up to Sopore. It eased the flood situation in the Valley for many years to come.

On the political front, Bakshi had to face a stiff challenge from the Plebiscite Front, which was formed in 1955 by the loyalists of Sheikh Abdullah. China's

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attack in October 1962 also gave him sleepless nights as the aggressors occupied 38,000 sq km in Aksai Chin in Eastern Ladakh.

Midway through his rule in 1958, colleagues G. M. Sadiq, Mir Qasim and D. P. Dhar differed with his policies and style of working and parted ways to form the Democratic National Conference (DNC) as a splinter group of NC. The new party inspired new political talents and made its own contribution towards secularization and democratization of the politics of the state by exposing the corrupt and repressive acts of the Bakshi regime. However, in 1961, after reconciliation with Bakshi, the group joined back the parent party and the government, much to the chagrin of the youth who had joined the party. The DNC had served its purpose and the Bakshi-Sadiq rift had made a considerable dent in the formidable following of the Plebiscite Front of Sheikh Abdullah. The reunion of the two parties was hailed by political pundits as a triumph of national interests. Later the remnants of the DNC amalgamated with the Communist Party of India.

Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad was no doubt liberal, but he was tough with his opponents and pro-Pakistan elements and put them behind bars. During his rule, a large number of people found employment in different government departments and corporations. His period was indeed memorable. But as happens with most rulers, they become complacent with the passage of time and get surrounded by sycophants and can't see the writing on the wall. In 1963, the Congress Party, after losing three Parliamentary by-elections, decided that under the 'Kamraj-plan', some ministers and chief ministers should resign and give all their time to party work. The final selection was left to Jawaharlal Nehru. Many central ministers, together with Kairon of Punjab and Bakshi, resigned. Although Bakshi had many weaknesses, even his worst critics agreed that he was a patriot, and during his rule, the state had prospered.

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Shams-ud-din

A comparatively less known advocate-politician from Anantnag town and a member of the State Legislative Assembly, Shams-ud-din, was sworn in as the third Prime Minister of the state after Bakshi resigned on October 12, 1963. Bakshi himself proposed his name. His stint as P. M. of the State, though short, was eventful. The holy relic of Prophet Mohammad was reported missing from the Hazratbal shrine on December 27, 1963.

The reports of the disappearance of the holy relic outraged all Kashmiris but due to the tactful handling of the situation by the Shams-ud-din's administration, the upsurge remained peaceful. In their demand to restore the holy relic, the Muslim protestors were joined by Hindus and Sikhs in large numbers. The Central Government directed the state administration to leave no stone unturned to recover the relic. Nehru deputed the then-minister without portfolio, Lal Bahadur Shastri, to Srinagar to help in the recovery. On January 4, 1964, the government announced, to the relief of all, that the holy relic had been recovered and duly authenticated by the highly-revered Muslim seer Mirakh Shah. There was jubilation all over the Valley after the news of the recovery came[6]. It has remained a mystery as to who had a hand in its disappearance. Shams-ud-din had to pay the price as he resigned on February 29, 1964. He was succeeded by Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq.

Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq

A graduate of Islamia College Lahore and Aligarh Muslim University, G. M. Sadiq had served in Sheikh Abdullah's first Cabinet from 1947 to 1953 and was the leader of the NC Party from 1957 to 1961. He was elected the Prime Minister of J&K on March 1, 1964. He became the first Chief Minister of the state in 1965 when the J&K Constitution was amended (Sixth Constitution of J&K Amendment Act, 1965) by the then Congress government and the position of Prime Minister was replaced with Chief Minister[7].

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With Sadiq, a widely respected politician, at the helm of affairs, things started to change and move rapidly. He ordered the release of Sheikh Abdullah on April 8, 1964, and the conspiracy case against him was withdrawn. Earlier, Balraj Puri had held a series of meetings with Sheikh Abdullah, and a dialogue was arranged between him and Nehru. In a statement, the Sheikh had declared that he had led the State's accession to India and was bound by whatever he said and did till August 8, 1953, but he was not responsible for what happened afterwards. Nehru welcomed the statement and said, "Before his (Abdullah's) arrest, accession of Kashmir to India had been more or less completed". Nehru was also keen to explore the possibility of a settlement with Pakistan, and it was at his suggestion that Sheikh Abdullah went there. While he was busy having discussions with leaders of Pakistan, Nehru died on May 27, 1964 and the Sheikh had to cut short his visit.

The Sadiq government brought about a number of constitutional amendments in the State Legislative Assembly. Articles 356 and 357 of the Constitution of India were made applicable to the State by virtue of which the Center could assume the governance of the State and the Indian Parliament could exercise its legislative powers. The nomenclature of the head of the state and the head of the government were changed to conform to the uniform pattern of the country. The head of the state, hitherto known as *Sadr-i-Riyasat* as elected by the State Legislative Assembly, was now to be nominated by the Central Government as Governor. The head of the Government, hitherto known as the Prime Minister, would be called Chief Minister. The ruling National Conference was converted into the Pradesh National Congress Party on March 2, 1965. These changes were not liked by the people of the Valley and they reacted with anger against what they perceived as an assault on their identity. However, the people of Jammu and Ladakh welcomed these changes.

Subsequently, however, in 1967, Bakshi revived the National Conference when the official ruling group led by Sadiq was converted into the Pradesh Congress Committee. On account of Bakshi's organizational skills and the emotional appeal of a regional party on the one hand and the unpopular integrationist

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measures by Sadiq on the other, Bakshi gathered sufficient mass support and posed a serious challenge to the ruling party. In spite of the large-scale rejection of the nomination papers of his party, detection of duplicate votes and other malpractices, Bakshi was elected to the Lok Sabha from Srinagar. Eight members of his party were elected to the State Assembly from the Valley.

The bold initiative of Pandit Nehru to send Sheikh Abdullah to Pakistan had come to an end after his demise. However, while Nehru was still alive, President Ayub Khan of Pakistan had on May 25, 1964 rejected the proposal of the Sheikh for India-Pakistan-Kashmir Confederation. On February 5, 1965, Sheikh Abdullah, his wife Begum Abdullah and Afzal Beg left for a tour of Europe and West Asia including a pilgrimage to Mecca. During the tour Sheikh Abdullah had a meeting in Algeria with Zhou Enlai, Prime Minister of China. The Government of India took a serious view of this meeting and asked him to return. When the Sheikh and party landed in Delhi on May 8, 1965 he and Beg were arrested.

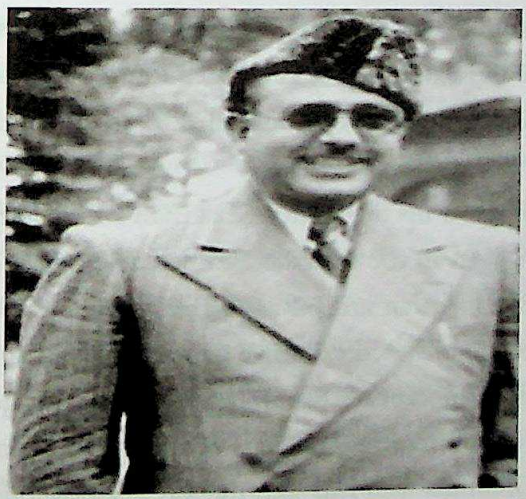

Fig 4: G. M. Sadiq was responsible for bringing Jammu & Kashmir closer to the Indian Union

In 1965, Ayub Khan took the misadventure of attacking India, perhaps under the impression that India after Nehru was weaker than before. China had attacked India in 1962 and exposed its lack of defence preparedness. On

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August 5, 1965, between 26,000 to 33,000 Pakistani soldiers under Operation 'Gibraltar', crossed the Line of Control dressed as Kashmiri locals and headed for various areas within Kashmir to participate in the insurgency against Indian rule. Indian forces, tipped off by the local populace, crossed the Line of Control. Supported by heavy artillery, they met with considerable success in capturing strategic mountain positions. By the end of August, however, both sides had made relative progress; Pakistan had made progress in areas such as Teetwal, Uri and Poonch and India had captured Haji Pir Pass, 8 km into Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

On September 1, 1965, Pakistan launched 'Operation Grand Slam' in the Chhamb sector with the objective of capturing the vital town of Akhnoor in Jammu, which would cut off the supply routes of Indian troops. Despite the failure of Operation Gibraltar, Ayub Khan thought it prudent to attack with an overwhelming ratio of troops and tanks. Pakistan made initial gains, but India blunted these with air strikes. On September 2, 1965, Pakistan retaliated, and its air force attacked Indian air bases both in Kashmir and Punjab. Kashmiris were stunned to see the Pakistani planes flying very low over Srinagar, Budgam and Pattan. They succeeded in dropping bombs on Srinagar airport and army cantonment Pattan but failed to do much damage.

India's decision to open up the front in Pakistan's Punjab forced Pakistan to relocate troops engaged in the operation to defend Punjab. Operation Grand Slam failed and the Pakistan army was unable to capture Akhnoor. The war lasted for five weeks and caused extensive damage and casualties on both sides. The aim of Pakistan to capture Kashmir by force had failed for the second time. The defeat of Pakistan at the hands of India disappointed those sections of pro-Pakistan Kashmiris who had seen the war as a possibility of fulfilment of their dream of becoming 'Pakistani citizens'. The war ended with an UN-mandated ceasefire on September 23, 1965. A peace accord, called the 'Tashkent Declaration', was signed on January 10, 1966, between India and Pakistan in Tashkent, Uzbekistan; it restored the boundary in J&K to the 1949 ceasefire line.

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Kashmiri Pandit Agitation

On July 28, 1967, a news item appeared in the Daily *Martand* from Srinagar that a Pandit girl Parmeshwari Handoo from Rainawari, was forcibly married to a Muslim man. The girl was the only child of a poor widow. It was reported that she was working as a sales representative in a government-run store and when she did not return home, her mother panicked and the police were informed. In a couple of days, the police found out that she had converted and married G. R. Kanth, a Muslim colleague of hers. Prominent leaders of the KP community, namely Amarnath Vaishnavi, Premnath Kaul (Ghassi), Bal Krishan Handoo and Tika Lal Taploo, demanded the restoration of the minor girl to her mother. When nothing happened, community members gathered at Sheetal Nath's premises for a peaceful agitation. The speakers alleged that the girl had been abducted, converted and married against her wishes. The couple was detained at a police station. It was reported by the police that the mother and some relatives of Parmeshwari (named Parveen Akhtar after her conversion), besides some leaders, were given ample opportunity and time to meet her and talk to her. They also said that they had confirmed that Parmeshwari was not a minor, as stated by her mother in her FIR. The police also said that the girl was adamant on not returning to her mother and that efforts of her mother and relatives to talk her out of marriage had failed. Thereafter she and Kanth were freed. The leaders did not believe the story of the police and alleged that they were siding with the Kanth family and they insisted that the case should be taken to a court of law. When this was not agreed upon by the government, the agitators decided to come out on the streets. The agitation intensified and Pandit employees and students boycotted work and classes. A Kashmiri Pandit agitator died on August 24, 1967, due to a head injury. On another occasion, a baton charge on peaceful agitators resulted in two more deaths. This further infuriated the KP Community. D. P. Dhar, a cabinet minister, was constantly monitoring the agitation and trying to talk to the leaders, but they were adamant. The government's position was that the girl was, in fact, a major and had willingly converted and married the

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Muslim guy. The Pandit community felt that D. P. Dhar was not playing a constructive role, and thus, he lost his popularity among them.

As the agitation was showing no signs of dying down, Indira Gandhi deputed her Home Minister, Y. B. Chavan, to meet with the leaders of the agitation in the first week of September 1967. On reaching Srinagar he was first made to meet a group of KP youth who had been promised jobs for sabotaging the agitation. They told Chavan that the Pandit youth were agitating mainly to get government jobs than the restoration of Parameshwari Handoo to her mother. So, during the meeting with the Pandit leaders he bluntly asked them whether the agitation was for *chhokri* or *naukri* (girl or the job). The Pandit leaders protested and strongly denied the charge as false propaganda. Understanding the sensitivity of the situation, Chavan toned down and told the leaders that he had impressed upon the state government to look into their grievances sympathetically. He also appealed to the leaders that the agitation should be called off in the national interest as J&K was a sensitive border state. Subsequently, the leaders of the agitation were invited for talks by the state government and given assurances that the matter would be thoroughly probed and the grievances of the community addressed. The KP leaders, thereafter, called off the agitation. The Pandit community was disappointed with the decision of their leaders to give in so easily. It is important to add that even though the agitation had failed to bring back Parmeshwari yet it did create a sense of unity and togetherness in the community. One more important gain was that the people of Jammu wholeheartedly came out in support of the agitation as they understood that Pandits, like them, were being discriminated against. The grievances of the community, though, were never addressed by the then or any other future administration of the state.

As a matter of fact, right from the day the NC came to power, Kashmiri Pandits were discriminated against in all walks of life. Under the 'land to the tiller' law, many lost large chunks of their ancestral land—their only source of income, without any compensation. In the matter of admissions to educational institutions, both academic and technical, their merit was overlooked. So was

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the case with recruitments, promotions, postings and transfers. The community felt widely discriminated against and the agitation gave them an opportunity to give vent to their feelings. It was only during the second term of Sheikh Abdullah in the seventies that after receiving directions from the Supreme Court of India, some relief came to the community in the matter of appointments, promotions in services and allocation of seats in technical institutions on the basis of their merit.

Finding it difficult to get government jobs in their home state, many educated Pandit youth migrated to other states for employment. The private sector in the country also offered opportunities for such educated and qualified persons. Within the state, they could get jobs in central government departments like posts and telegraph, accountant general's office, insurance companies and banks where recruitment was made purely on the basis of merit and qualifications.

Gajendragadkar Commission

The people of Jammu also had a grievance that their region was being overlooked and did not receive a due share in development and services. In April 1967, a 'Jammu Forum' was formed. It goes to the credit of G. M. Sadiq that he sympathetically looked into the grievances of the Jammu people and his government appointed the 'Gajendragadkar Commission' on November 6, 1967, to consider the demands of the Forum. After due deliberations for over a year, the commission submitted its report on November 28, 1968. Some of the recommendations were:

- Statutory regional development boards at the state level.
- Statutory regional development boards, one each at Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.
- Heads of the department on a regional basis.
- Creation of regional recruitment boards.
- Establishment of a full-fledged University for the Jammu region.

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- Opening of a separate medical College at Jammu.

These recommendations had far-reaching consequences so far as the development of the Jammu region was concerned.

It must be pointed out here that the Gajendragadkar Commission report, instead of benefitting Kashmiri Pandits in any manner, limited their scope of employment. They were bracketed with the Hindu community of the whole state, and their job quota was reserved at 1 percent against the earlier 3 percent. That was a great blow to the educated KP youth, and they had thus to seek employment outside the state or even abroad. The ministers and bureaucrats, when approached by educated unemployed KP youth for a job, shamelessly responded that the available jobs in Kashmir were meant for the Muslims and that the whole of India was open to them to seek jobs there.

Nallah Mar Project

Nallah Mar (a branch canal from a swamp) was a historical part of an ancient irrigation-cum-navigation canal system existing in Srinagar city up to the late sixties and mid-seventies of the 20th century. The natural and man-made canal starting from Marsar (an alpine lake in Tral Valley), was originally conceived and started by Raja Baka (634-594 BCE). It was connected with other channels and water bodies and lakes of Srinagar and served as an important water outlet as well as a navigation canal. The Nallah, also called *Marqual*, was an important business center and an easy way of transportation. Muslims used to go to Qamar Sahab and Pandits to Kheer Bhawani via the Mar, and everything needed was made available through this waterway"[8].

During the rule of Bakshi, it was pointed out that the *Nallah Mar* required cleaning and desilting, but it was not feasible. The plan was revived during Sadiq's rule. However, the engineers suggested that it was a formidable job to clean and dredge the *Nallah* and other connected channels, and the easiest and best alternative was to fill them up and construct a road instead, which would

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facilitate road transportation in the old city. The actual filling was done during the regime of Sheikh Abdullah in 1975 [9]. The relatively wide road did provide connectivity but choked other water bodies connected to it. The burial of Nallah Mar led to the stagnation of *Brari Nambal* lagoon and choked the world-famous Dal Lake. Brari Nambal, which had clean, fresh water over the years, turned into a stinking cesspool. Decades later, the city is striving to recuperate from the loss of Nallah Mar. Once known as Venice of East, Srinagar had many streams crisscrossing the town, and Nallah Mar was as important for it as a Jugular vein"[10]. Nallah Mar is now a part of Srinagar's past history.

Syed Mir Qasim

Syed Mir Qasim, a politician from the village Dooru Shahabad in Anantnag district, took over as the CM of J&K state on December 12, 1971. Earlier, he had served as a Minister in the cabinets of Bakshi and Sadiq. He was also involved in the drafting of the Constitution of J&K after independence. He had started his political career during the British Raj when he became a leader of the 'Quit Kashmir' movement and was put behind bars for his advocacy against the monarchical rule of Hari Singh. He is credited with establishing the Indian National Congress in Kashmir, but for doing that, he had, for some time, suffered the ire of the Plebiscite Front who had given a call of '*Tarak-i-mawalat*' (social boycott) against him and other Congress leaders.

Soon after Qasim had become CM, Sheikh Abdullah, for the first time after his dismissal from power in 1953, decided to take part in the 1972 elections to the State assembly. He indicated his willingness to a dialogue with Indira Gandhi for a settlement of the Kashmir dispute. However, his entry to the state, along with that of his wife and Afzal Beg, was banned, and the Plebiscite Front was declared unlawful. In fact, its members were also debarred from taking part in elections. Mir Qasim admits in his autobiography[11] that to frustrate further attempts by any group with the support of Abdullah, the Congress enlisted the services of the *Jamait- i-Islami* to fill the vacant political space and guaranteed

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its success in five constituencies. This was surprising because, during the 1967 elections, Indira Gandhi had publicly stated that there was no need for an opposition party in Kashmir. It was the first occasion when the Jamait received constitutional recognition and political legitimacy in Kashmir[12]. It also projected into the limelight the pro-Pakistani Sayed Ali Shah Geelani, who later became a big headache for the country for almost three decades after the rise of Pakistan-sponsored militancy in Kashmir in 1989-90.

Shimla Agreement

Following the defeat, the Army Junta of Pakistan handed over power to a civilian government headed by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He was under great public pressure to secure the release of war prisoners from India. A summit conference between Indira Gandhi and Bhutto was organized at Shimla from June 28, 1972, to July 2, 1972. The two countries reached an agreement which came to be known as the 'Shimla Agreement'. The broad features of the pact included that the principal purpose of the charter of the United Nations would govern the relations between the two countries. The two countries resolved to settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations. The agreement also rationalized the ceasefire line in the state as the line of control and committed the two governments to resolve the Kashmir dispute through bilateral talks. The agreement was ratified by the Parliaments of both nations soon thereafter. Having secured the release of the Pakistani prisoners of war from India, Bhutto started talking of a thousand-year war with India to avenge the humiliating defeat of his country and the loss of East Pakistan.

The Kashmir Accord and Sheikh's Return to Power

In November 1974, while Mir Qasim was the CM, G. Parthasarathy and Afzal Beg signed the 'Kashmir Accord' as the representatives of Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Abdullah, respectively. Accordingly, Mir Qasim resigned and joined the Union Cabinet. Sheikh Abdullah was sworn in as CM of the State on February 25, 1975, after the Congress legislative party offered support to him.

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Thereafter, Sheikh Abdullah, along with his colleagues in the cabinet, travelled by road to Srinagar. Their first night stop was at Tara Palace Udhampur. Ironically the Sheikh had spent many years of his internment at this palace and had developed some love for the place. The next day, Sheikh and his colleagues left for the Valley and were given a rousing welcome along the way to Srinagar. There was no doubt that Sheikh Abdullah was loved by the majority of Kashmiris. There were only a handful of people, such as the followers of *Jamait-i-Islami,* who disliked him for having rejected the idea of joining Pakistan.

The government of Sheikh Abdullah started to work earnestly, and there was a semblance of good governance right from day one. The plans and projects of Mir Qasim's government continued and people, by and large, were happy. During a visit to Mata Vaishno Devi shrine, he noticed that there was a single narrow natural tunnel through which the devotees had to get in and get out. It took the pilgrims a long time to move and the crowds swelled. He immediately ordered the construction of a tunnel through which the pilgrims would enter at one end and exit at the other. It made things much easier for both the pilgrims and the administration. He took a keen interest in the education and health sectors and there were visible improvements in both.

During Sheikh's return to power from Feb 1975 to March 1977, the political situation in the state changed. On March 27, 1977, Sheikh Abdullah resigned as Chief Minister after the Congress Party withdrew support in the Assembly. Governor's rule was imposed, and the state assembly was dissolved on the advice of the Council of Ministers. In June 1977, the State assembly elections were held. These were hailed as the first free and fair elections conducted by the Election Commission of India on the instructions of the then PM Morarji Desai. Results were declared on July 4, 1977, and the National Conference got 47 out of 76 seats. Sheikh Abdullah once again took over the reins of the state as CM.

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All went well till Sheikh Abdullah's health started showing signs of decline in 1980. Thus, he nominated his son, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, as his successor. It was widely believed then that he had done so at the behest of his wife. It was rumored in social circles that the nomination of Farooq as successor by the Sheikh was resented by his son-in-law G. M. Shah, the seniormost National Conference minister in his cabinet. Subsequent events of 1984, when the Farooq government was dismissed, showed that there were differences within the Abdullah family about the earlier nomination by the patriarch. Sheikh Abdullah died on September 8, 1982, after a brief illness.

The death of Sheikh Abdullah plunged the whole Valley into grief and mourning. The large majority of Kashmiris loved him as their leader and in his death, they saw the end of an era. Indira Gandhi flew to Srinagar to attend his funeral.

Farooq Abdullah Sworn in as Chief Minister

Following the death of his father, Farooq Abdullah, with the blessings of Indira Gandhi, was hastily sworn in as the CM of J&K state. The June 1983 assembly election was won by the National Conference, and Farooq Abdullah came to power again. However, the internal feud within the Abdullah family had been simmering ever since his coming to power. Although Farooq had the blessings of Indira Gandhi in becoming the Chief Minister yet he proved too immature in understanding politics and handling governance. He dropped experienced and senior cabinet ministers of his father, like D. D. Thakur and P. L. Handoo who could have guided and advised him on various issues. Instead, he joined hands with the national opposition parties and hosted their conclave at Srinagar on October 5 and 6, 1983. Indira Gandhi was not amused. To make matters even worse, on January 14, 1984, six Congress workers were killed in police firing on a protest demonstration. On February 11, 1984, Maqbool Bhat, the founder of the Kashmir Liberation Front, was hanged for terrorist activities in Tihar Jail, Delhi, and a lot of resentment was registered by the Muslim population of Kashmir.

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On April 26, 1984, Jagmohan was sworn in as Governor of J&K state. As stated earlier, Farooq Abdullah, because of his immature actions, had earned the displeasure of the central government and many of his own party colleagues. His actions, like motorbike rides with a film actress on pillion seat and singing and dancing in public, had earned him the nickname '*Wazir* e *Disco*'. He was not being taken seriously by the people who would, at times, laugh at his actions. The final blow came to Farooq when the Congress party engineered the defection of NC-MLAs led by his brother-in-law G. M. Shah and his government fell. G. M. Shah formed his own faction of the National Conference (NC- K) and was sworn in as Chief Minister on July 2, 1984.

G. M. Shah as Chief Minister

The brief rule of G. M. Shah, also known as *Gulla Shah*, was that of chaos and confusion. There were regular *hartals* (strikes) and demonstrations followed by the imposition of curfews throughout 1985. On August 15, 1985, there were widespread demonstrations in Kashmir and police had to resort to firing. A slogan-shouting abusive crowd entered the Ganesh temple at Ganpatyar and vandalized it. This infuriated the Kashmiri Pandit youth of the area. In the month of February 1986, crowds of Muslims entered temples and shrines in the Anantnag district in South Kashmir, roughed up the priests, broke images and idols and set temples and houses of Pandits on fire. It was alleged that a particular political party was behind these attacks on Hindus. It perhaps also signaled the start of widespread violence and destruction that was to become the norm in 1989-90. As the word of attacks on temples reached Jammu, it infuriated the Hindus there. As the situation was now taking a communal color the government led by Shah was dissolved on March 7, 1986, and the State came under Governor's rule. The rule of G. M. Shah will be remembered for the frequent imposition of curfews which earned him the title '*Gulla Curfew*'!

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Rajiv-Farooq Accord

After the landslide victory of the Congress party in the country in the parliamentary elections of December 1984, Farooq Abdullah gave up his role as an opposition leader and offered unconditional support to PM Rajiv Gandhi. This led to the signing of the Rajiv-Farooq accord and the formation of the National Conference-Congress coalition government on November 7, 1986. The accord was defended by the two parties mainly on the ground that it would ensure a larger inflow of central funds to the State. Farooq justified the formation of the coalition and said, "Anyone who wants to form a government in Kashmir cannot do so without sharing power with New Delhi".[13] As it turned out later, the accord had far-reaching consequences for the state and the country.

The NC and the Congress Party together fought state assembly elections in March 1987. A conglomerate of 14 Muslim parties of Kashmir had earlier, in January 1987, formed a 'Muslim United Front' to fight the Assembly elections. It was alleged that the assembly elections of March 1987 were rigged. In constituencies where elections were manipulated, the polling agents of the opposition candidates were arrested and beaten up not only by the police but also by the agents of 'winning' NC candidates.[7] Many of them comprised the nucleus of the militant secessionist movement and crossed over to POK, where they were trained by Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and Pakistan Army for carrying out terrorist activities in J&K. Kashmiri Pandits became the first target of these terrorists resulting in their mass exodus from the Valley after the January 19, 1990 uprising.

Some actions of Farooq Abdullah rudely shocked the people of Ladakh and Jammu. The people of Ladakh were hurt by non-representation in the new NC-Congress government and the failure to grant them the Scheduled Tribe status promised by Indira Gandhi in 1980. The people of Jammu were angered by the decision of the State Government in 1987 to curtail the number of offices that moved to the winter capital every year. The reaction to the decision

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was that all sections of the Jammu population joined in agitation from November 7, 1987, under the banner of the Jammu Bar Association, demanding the withdrawal of the government order. The CM, who had earlier declined to settle the issue with the leaders of Jammu, had to reverse the order when Union Home Minister Buta Singh intervened personally by visiting Srinagar.

By 1988, things had started to change for the worst. On June 10, 1988, demonstrations were held in Srinagar to protest against a sudden and steep rise in power tariffs at a time when the power supply had become most erratic. The death of three persons in police firing further infuriated the people. The government rejected the demand for an enquiry, and a strike was observed all over the Valley. This was followed by the first terrorist incident of two powerful bomb blasts in July 1988 in Srinagar, which just missed their intended targets—the central telegraph office and the television station. In August 1988, the simmering discontent in the Valley found a clear anti-India expression through a series of events: Pakistan's Independence Day (14 August) was celebrated with fervor, but a strike was organized, and black flags raised on 15 August, India's Independence Day. To further aggravate the situation, the death of Pakistan President Zia-ul-Haq on August 17, 1988, was mourned in the Valley. Kashmir had become a crucible of unrest, with bomb blasts, killings and kidnappings taking place throughout 1988 and 1989.

The Long Spell of Central Rule and Return of Farooq Abdullah

The Jammu and Kashmir State came under the longest spell of Central rule from January 1990 to October 1996 after a separatist movement and breakdown of the administrative machinery led to the resignation of Farooq Abdullah. It was hoped by New Delhi that Jagmohan would control the separatist movement, but unfortunate events of violence and firing by security forces resulting in several deaths brought his stint to an end. He was replaced by G. C. Saxena as Governor, who stayed in that position from May 26, 1990 to March 12, 1993. During his period as Governor, militancy and turmoil

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reached a peak and could not be controlled. He was subsequently replaced by Gen. (Retd) K. V. Krishna Rao on March 12, 1993. It was his second term as Governor of J&K state. Earlier, he had been Governor of the state from July 1989 to January 1990. In his capacity as Governor of J&K, General Rao was instrumental in controlling terrorism and restoring peace and democracy in an insurgency-torn state after a long gap of seven years. Mention must be made here of Mohammad Yusuf Parray, fondly called *Kukka Parray*, who was roped in by the Indian security forces to fight separatist insurgents. He was a folk singer and a militant before he founded a pro-India militia, *Ikhwan-ul-Muslimoon*, that targeted insurgents. He was the man who made possible many of the successes against the separatist insurgents by the Indian security forces and, indeed, turned the tide against terrorism in the state. Unfortunately, however, he was killed in an ambush by the separatist insurgents on September 13, 2003, in his home town Hajjan at a time when peace had been greatly restored in the state[14].

In view of the control of insurgency and the return of peace in great measure, elections were held in 1996, which returned the NC to power again. Farooq Abdullah was sworn in as Chief Minister on October 9, 1996. Despite the restoration of an elected government, the acts of violence by separatist insurgents did not stop. They continued with their killing sprees targeting Hindus and Sikhs who had not left their homes in 1990. In the aftermath of the forced exodus of Hindus, nearly 30,000 residential homes were torched, and 200 places of worship were desecrated. Many more temples were damaged or destroyed between 7-9 December 1992 after the demolition of Babri Masjid at Ayodhya on 6 December 1992.

Kargil Conflict

When the Lahore Declaration was signed during the visit of PM Vajpayee to Pakistan in February 1999, promising to provide a peaceful and bilateral solution to the Kashmir conflict, Pakistani regulars had already infiltrated and occupied the strategic top Kargil ridges. Their aim was to cut off links between

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Kashmir and Ladakh, forcing India to negotiate a settlement of the "Kashmir dispute". However, timely detection of the occupation of Indian posts frustrated their plans.

PM Vajpayee contacted his counterpart Nawaz Sharif on the phone to complain about it, and the latter told him that he had no knowledge of such infiltration and occupation of Indian posts. A telephonic call between General Musharaf and his Chief of General Staff was intercepted and the conversation confirmed that the Pakistan generals had kept their prime minister out of the loop. The Pakistan army generals, however, claimed later that Nawaz Sharif had been told about it days before Vajpayee's Lahore visit. Whatever the truth, the Kargil war, from May 3 to July 26, 1999, started after Pakistan refused to pull back its troops, whom they called *Mujahideen*. The Indian Army and Air Force, in coordination, launched operations and forced Pakistanis to withdraw from the posts occupied by them on the Indian side of the LOC. The American President Bill Clinton and International pressure along with the sustained retaliation from Indian forces compelled the Pakistanis to move back to their side of the LOC. Pakistan even refused to take back the bodies of its dead soldiers. However, they returned the bodies of Indian soldiers they had captured, tortured and brutally killed.

The 2002 Elections

The 2002 elections did not give a clear majority to any party. The People's Democratic Party joined hands with the Congress party and formed a coalition government with the understanding that the Chief Minister's post would be shared. Thus, Mufti Sayeed took oath as CM on November 2, 2002. His first job was to open the Uri-Muzaffarabad Road and start a bus service from Srinagar to Muzaffarabad and trade between J&K and POK.

He also gave orders for cleaning the river Jhelum and relocating the *Dungas* and *Khochas* (types of boats used for residence and transport of goods, respectively) anchored on both its banks downstream beyond Srinagar city.

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After completing his three-year term on November 2, 2005, he handed over the charge to Ghulam Nabi Azad, also a Muslim but from Jammu province. Towards the end of Azad's tenure in 2008, separatists under the leadership of Ali Shah Geelani started agitation against the construction of temporary shelters for the annual pilgrimage to the Holy Amar Nath cave. A counter-agitation was started at Jammu by Hindus who saw it as unnecessary interference in the conduct of *Amar Nath Yatra* by the separatists. Not able to control the situation, Ghulam Nabi Azad resigned on July 11, 2008. So, the Governor's rule was imposed once again. This time, Governor N. N. Vohra was able to restore order and elections were held peacefully. The NC got the majority and Omar Abdullah, grandson of the Sheikh, was sworn in as CM on January 5, 2009.

The period of Omar Abdullah's rule lasted from January 2009 till January 2015. Although he completed six years in office, it was a period of strikes and agitations spearheaded by the separatist hawk Geelani. Having remained MLA for three terms, Geelani's strong Pakistani leanings remained intact until he died in 2021 at 92. During Omar Abdullah's rule Geelani remained a troublemaker and spearheaded many agitations; he used to issue 'weekly calendar' for protests and strikes. In 2010, Geelani brought the Kashmir Valley to a grinding halt after a youth was killed by a teargas shell. Nearly 120 people lost their lives during weeks of violent protests that followed.

Also, in October 2010, a school dropout named Burhan Wani from Tral joined the Islamist militant organization Hizbul Mujahideen at the age of 15. He soon became a popular figure primarily through the use of social media and emerged as a key militant leader. He had reportedly recruited numerous foot soldiers through his personal efforts. By using social media as a tool of potent information warfare, he became a poster boy and romanticized the militant movement in Kashmir. Wani's killing in an encounter on July 8, 2016, sparked massive violent protests across the Valley, resulting in 96 casualties and injuries to thousands of civilians and security personnel[15].

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A devastating flood hit the Valley in September 2014. The state and central governments made extraordinary efforts to save the people of the Valley from the deluge. The Army and Air Force worked day and night to feed and rescue the people who were trapped in their houses surrounded by flood water. PM Modi, after an aerial survey, called it a "national calamity". The flood took the lives of 277 people in J&K and 280 people in POK, besides killing thousands of cattle. Hundreds of houses were also damaged mostly in and around Srinagar.

January 2015 elections resulted in a hung assembly. After protracted discussions and formulation of a minimum common program, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) of the state and the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) formed a coalition government. Mufti Sayeed took oath as CM for the second time on March 1, 2015. Soon after taking charge, he experienced health problems and was in and out of the hospital till he breathed his last on January 7, 2016. His daughter Mehbooba Mufti was elected leader of the party but she did not agree to take oath as CM. So, the state was again put under Governor's rule till Mehbooba Mufti finally decided to take the oath as the first Woman CM of J&K on April 4, 2016.

The alliance of PDP and BJP soon proved to be uneasy and there were differences between them on several issues, which came to the fore in February 2018. The differences included the use of pellet guns by security forces, which caused death and injuries, the alleged rape and murder of an eight-year-old Gujjar (tribal) girl in Kathua District and Mehbooba's decision to suspend security operations for the month of Ramadan, which was not reciprocated by the separatist insurgents and 30 people were killed by them during the one-sided ceasefire[16]. The BJP announced the end of the alliance and said it was because of the deteriorating security situation and the need to get tough with the terrorists. On June 19, 2018, Mehbooba Mufti resigned as the CM and said, "The muscular policy will not work in Kashmir". Thus, the State came under Governor's rule once again, which in turn became President's rule from 20 December 2018 till 30 October 2019.

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Reorganization of Jammu and Kashmir State

On August 5, 2019, both houses of the Indian Parliament passed a resolution to amend Article 370 and extend the Constitution of India in its entirety to the state, which was implemented as a constitutional order by the President of India. At the same time, the Parliament also passed the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act 2019, which contained provisions that dissolved the State of Jammu and Kashmir and established two new Union territories, namely the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and that of Ladakh[17].

The reorganization act was assented to by the President of India and came into effect on October 31, 2019. Prior to these measures, the Union Government locked down the Valley, increased the deployment of security forces, imposed section 144 that prevented assembly of people and placed leaders such as former CMs like Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti under house arrest. As expected, there was some resentment among the Muslim majority in the Valley for the revocation of Article 370 and reorganization of the state, but there were no protests. The people of Jammu and Ladakh, on the contrary, welcomed the move.

Following the abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution by the Parliament on August 5, 2019, questions have been raised about the wisdom of incorporating it in the first place, even though meant to be temporary. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India, has been recently criticized by many in the party in power for the mistakes (some have called them blunders) in handling Kashmir. They have opined that the Home Minister Sardar Patel had deftly handled the integration of the princely states into the Indian Union and had he been given a free hand to deal with Jammu and Kashmir after accession, there would have been no problem.

The decision to go to the United Nations, reportedly at the behest of the Governor General of India, Lord Mountbatten, was a big mistake because it created more problems for India than solving any. It is intriguing that instead

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of lodging its complaint under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which deals with acts of aggression, India invoked Chapter VI under which parties to the dispute seek Pacific settlement of disputes.

India's agreement to a ceasefire on January 1, 1949, has also been criticized. It is pointed out that it deprived the erstwhile princely state of its one-third part, which included strategically important Gilgit and Baltistan, allegedly under pressure from Sheikh Abdullah. It is pointed out that the non-Kashmiri speaking populations of Pak-occupied-Kashmir (the so-called Azad Kashmir) did not consider Sheikh Abdullah as their leader, and he had shown no interest in them.

For those who idealize Nehru, the criticism is not justified. They point out the fact that he had his own reasons for acting the way he thought best under the circumstances. It is said that the Indian Army was reluctant to proceed further due to operational constraints that forced Nehru to agree to a ceasefire. However, they agree that going to the United Nations was unnecessary and should have been avoided. It must be realized that most people agree that after all, he was human and not infallible.

Revocation of Article 370 came as a great relief to West Punjab refugees who had fled from their homes in the wake of communal violence before and after independence and to Valmikis (municipal workers) brought from Punjab. They were living in many villages and towns of Jammu province without the right to vote and could not apply for government jobs. No government had done it in more than 70 years.

Recent developments in Jammu and Kashmir

After the turmoil and turbulence of almost the last ten years of the previous century, J&K once again returned to the path of progress and development with the dawn of the 21st century. There was unprecedented growth in education, health, agriculture, horticulture, public works, public health

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engineering, social services and *Panchayati-raj* just to name a few. The biggest change could be seen in education. Against just two universities, one each in Kashmir and Jammu and one agriculture university in Kashmir in 2000, there are six state universities, three private universities and two agriculture universities at present. The number of government degree colleges has gone up from about 35 to more than a hundred in addition to scores of private colleges. There are seven government medical colleges and two private colleges now, compared to a total of two in 2000. Today there are two Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) and two Indian Institutes of Management (IIM). In addition, there are several engineering colleges in the private sector. Potable drinking water is now available in almost all villages of the Union territory and electricity has reached even the remotest villages of the UT. Banking and telecommunication are available everywhere. Road connectivity has increased at a fast pace. Srinagar Airport is now an International one. Jammu Airport has been widened and extended. The UT has Indian railways connecting Banihal in Jammu with Baramulla in Kashmir. The Jammu-Srinagar railway line is an engineering marvel as it passes through long tunnels and tall bridges, one of which, over the Chenab River, will be the tallest in the world. The Jammu-Srinagar National Highway is being four-laned, and tunnels at Chenani and Banihal will not only cut distance but also travelling time. These are indeed great achievements and will boost tourism and generate employment in J&K. Steps are afoot to industrialize the union territory in a big way. It is expected to generate employment on a large scale.

Conclusion

The history of Jammu and Kashmir in the Post- Independence period can be divided into two periods: The period from 1947 to 1989 and 1990 to the present day. Despite the fact that Pakistan forced three wars on India in 1947, 1965 and 1971 over Kashmir, and China forced a war in Ladakh in 1962, the state remained by and large peaceful and progressed well in a democratic set-up. Having failed to wrest Kashmir by force, Pakistan evolved a strategy of proxy war by sending trained terrorists into the state to create mayhem and

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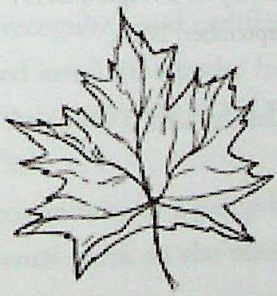
indulge in violence and killing of innocent people. Almost the whole population of Kashmiri Pandits and a large number of Sikhs and nationalist Muslims were forced to leave their homes and hearths to become refugees in their own country.

The Indian army and security forces, who till 1989 were restricted to their barracks, had to act in order to defeat the proxy war. Unfortunately, it cost a very large number of precious human lives to bring peace. As per official statistics, the proxy war resulted in the loss of 41,000 lives from 1990 to 2017. The casualties include 14,000 civilians, 5,000 security personnel and 22,000 terrorists. In all, there were 69,820 militancy-related incidents during the period[18]. Human rights groups say that the number is much higher than the official figure. The proxy war almost stopped development for seven long years (1990 to 1996), but once democracy was restored, progress and development picked up again. As far as Kashmiri Pandits are concerned, they are still living in refugee camps in Jammu, Delhi and other cities of the country for the last 34 years. They are waiting with the hope that one day they will be able to go back to their roots in Kashmir.



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Chapter 8

THE GENOCIDE OF HINDUS OF KASHMIR

Satish Ganjoo, Ashwani Chrungoo,
and Ashok Raina

The thorns of one's own land are better than the Sombal flowers of an alien land

-Hargopal Kaul Khasta 1994

The word "genocide" was first coined by the Polish lawyer Raphäel Lemkin in 1944 in his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. It consists of the Greek prefix *genos*, meaning race or tribe, and the Latin suffix *cide*, meaning killing. Lemkin developed the term partly in response to the Nazi policies of systematic murder of Jewish people during the Holocaust but also in response to previous instances in history of targeted actions aimed at the destruction of particular groups of people. Later on, Lemkin led the campaign to have genocide recognized and codified as an international crime. Genocide was first recognized as a crime under international law in 1946 by the United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/96-I). Genocide includes:

i. Killing members of a community or a group because of their affiliations;
ii. Causing bodily or mental harm to the members of a community or a group;
iii. Deliberately inflicting conditions on the community or the group to bring about its physical destruction;
iv. Imposing measures to prevent births in the community or the group;
v. Forcibly transferring children from one group to another.

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Genocide is the destruction in whole or in part of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. The violence in Kashmir has involved the mass murder of members of Hindu minorities at the hands of Muslim terrorist groups.

Genocide is not a sudden happening; it happens when there is already an intent to destroy a race, a social group or an ethnic habitation. In Kashmir, eversince the advent of Islam, there was always an intent to destroy the existence of the indigenous people of the place, the Kashmiri Pandits (original Hindus of Kashmir). In order to discuss the wider subject of genocide and ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Pandits, it is important to go into the historical genesis of the genocide of Hindu minorities in Kashmir in an appropriate context. The fundamental violations in this regard can be listed under two broad headings:

- Killings of Hindus in Kashmir; and
- Destruction of Cultural Symbols (Shrines of Kashmir).

The State of India is a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations Covenants on Human Rights, The Charter of United Nations, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 16, 1966. On the one hand, the responsibility for the violation of human rights in the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) State rests upon the terrorist organizations and their supporting structures, and on the other hand, there was a colossal failure of the Indian State and its organs.

Earlier Exoduses

Kashmir was universally known as an abode of *Sufis* and saints. It presented a scenario of religious harmony, peace and absolute tolerance. The Kashmiri Hindu, having reached a high level of cultural attainment, was found to be a soft target and was thus subjected to the most horrendous tortures and

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atrocities in the name of service to Islam. A right-thinking person wonders whether the message of Islam was bloodshed, plunder, arson and liquidation of followers of other faiths or for spiritual betterment and exaltation of mankind at large. All this was and still is justified under the umbrella of *Jehad* (holy war). A Muslim intoxicated with religious frenzy and going on a spree of killing without rhyme or reason is saluted as a '*Mujahid*'.

Hindus in Kashmir are the only community around the world who have suffered not one but seven, often brutal, tyrannical holocausts and forced exoduses since the advent of Islam in the Saffron Valley.[1]

Sayyids came to Kashmir to avoid the intended massacre by Timur, the Lame. Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani (Shah Hamadan) entered Kashmir with 700 Sayyids; his son, Mir Muhammad Hamadani, followed with 300 more. They endured in the Valley under royal protection and disseminated the message of Islam. Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani (AD 1314-AD 1385) set the rules described in "*Zakhirat'ul Maluk*": (see Chapter 5 for details).

Sultan Sikandar—the Butshikan or idol-breaker (AD 1389-1413), was bigoted with fanatic religious zeal to spread Islam in the entire Valley of Kashmir. His fanaticism was stimulated by Mir Muhammad Hamadani and effectively implemented by Suha Bhatta, proselytized as Saifu'd Din. Jonaraja says, "There was no city, no town, no village, no woods where Turushikas left the temples of the gods unbroken".[2] The temple of Martand, which was of great significance to the Hindu civilization, was destroyed by digging deep into its foundations, removing the stones, filling the gaps with logs of wood and finally setting it on fire. Prior to this, huge hammers were used for one full year only to break and vandalize its fine sculptures. The stones and bricks which once configurated a marvelous and splendid temple or monastery were used to build mosques. It was notified in the Valley that if a Hindu did not become a Muslim, he must leave the country or be killed. As a result, some of the Hindus fled, some forcibly accepted Islam, and many Brahmins consented to be killed than converted. It is said that Sikandar collected, by these methods,

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six maunds (224 kilograms) of sacred thread from Hindus (works to about 45,000 male individuals) who were either killed or forcibly converted. These sacred threads were burnt, and all the religious books of the Hindus were thrown into the Dal Lake. The Kashmiri Hindus, numbering over one hundred thousand, were also drowned in the lake or burnt at a spot near Rainawari in Srinagar city known as *Bhatta Mazar* (the graveyard of the *Bhattas* or Kashmiri Hindus). Sikandar issued orders that no man should wear the tilak mark on his forehead and no woman be allowed to perform *sati*. He also insisted on breaking and melting all the gold and silver idols of deities and coining the metal into money.

Hindus fled to neighboring regions of Kishtwar and Bhaderwah *via* the Simthan Pass and also to various provinces of India via Batote (known as Bata-wath, the path of the *Bhattas*). Jonaraja writes, "Crowds of Hindus ran away in different directions through by-passes; their social life was totally disrupted, their life became miserable with hunger and fatigue; many died in scorching heat; many got emaciated due to under-nourishment; many lived on alms in villages enroute to the provinces in India; some disguised as Muslims roamed about the country searching for their distressed families; their means of livelihood were snatched from them to prevent them getting educated and to break their morale; the Hindus lolled out their tongues like dogs searching for 'a dog's morsel' at every door". According to the living memory of the Kashmiri Hindus, only eleven of their families stayed back in Kashmir; the rest, rather than abandoning the religion of their forefathers, chose to migrate, leaving behind their beloved homes, hearths, lands and everything, only to protect their religion and faith causing the **First Mass Exodus** of the community. The exercise would continue for centuries to come.

During his rule, Sultan Ali Shah, the tyrant (AD 1413-1420), son of Sikandar Butshikan, carried on with homicides, conversions, and tyranny and enforced *Jizya* (a tax imposed on non-Muslims). A multitude of celebrated Brahmins, who prided in their caste, fled from the country through back roads as the main roads were closed. Oppressed by various calamities such as the encounter

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with the enemy, fear of snakes, fierce heat and scanty food, many Brahmins perished on the way. This was the **Second Exodus** of the Kashmiri Hindus. Jonaraja calls it "*Chandh-Dandh*"—violent, cruel, brutal and horrible punishment for the Brahmins of Kashmir.

The next Sultan, Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-1470 CE), turned out to be the most tolerant and benevolent Muslim ruler of Kashmir. It is said that he had a medical condition that was cured by a Kashmiri Hindu medicine man. Pleased with him, he removed all restrictions against the Hindus. Those who had left Kashmir were persuaded to come back. He also allowed the rebuilding of several demolished temples and built a few new ones.

Mir Shams-ud-Din Araki, who visited the Saffron Valley twice in AD 1477 and 1496, was the founder of the Nurbakhshiya Order (Shia sect) in Kashmir[3]. His mission was the vigorous propagation of his faith. So, not contented with peaceful preaching, violent methods were employed for the conversion of natives. Not only the poor, vulnerable Brahmins but the Sunni Muslims were also violently converted to the Shia sect through extreme torture. About 24,000 of them were forcibly converted to the Shia sect of Islam. Araki had even issued orders that every day about 1,500 to 2,000 Brahmins be brought to his doorstep, remove their sacred threads, administer *Kalima* to them, circumcise them and make them eat beef. These decrees were brutally carried out. Hindu religious scriptures and about 18 magnificent temples were destroyed, the property was confiscated, and women abused. Those who stayed behind were not only forced to pay *jizya*, but their noses and ears were chopped off. To escape the tremendous pain and agony, they would often plead, "I am not a Bhatta".

When Fatah Khan (1506-1516 CE) proclaimed himself the ruler and ascended the throne under the title of Sultan Fatah Shah, the situation in the Valley was depressing and deplorable. Actual power was in the hands of his Prime Minister Shamas Chak and some of his trusted friends, namely Nasrat Raina, Sarhang Raina and Moosa Raina. Moosa Raina subsequently succeeded

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Shamas Chak as the prime minister. When persecution and religious repression became intolerable, some Hindus rallied around the leadership of one Pandit Nirmal Kanth, a respected scholar. They sent a delegation to Moosa Raina to appeal for mercy. Instead, he came down with a heavy hand on the members of the delegation. After the death of Moosa Raina, Mohammed Shah appointed Kazi Chak (1517 CE), a Shia, the ruler. Kazi Chak left no stone unturned in inflicting pain and misery on the Hindu population. In one such incident, he decided to carry out a wholesale massacre of the infidels on the holy festival Day of Ashura (Muharram, 1518 CE) and about seven to eight hundred of them were put to death. He initiated a systematic and planned campaign for the desecration and dismantling of Hindu temples and sacred places. The movable and immovable properties of Hindus were looted and ravaged. The Chaks ordered that one hundred cows be slaughtered every day to wreak vengeance on the Kashmiri Hindus so as to shock them into accepting Islam. The Chak rulers were cruel and heartless in devising ever-new methods of inflicting pain and misery on the native Hindus. Those who somehow escaped getting converted to Islam fled their native places to seek refuge and sustenance at safer places in the neighborhood of Kashmir Valley. Thousands of Brahmins committed suicide to evade this horrific barbarism, and countless migrated to other places, resulting in their **Third Exodus** from the Valley of Kashmir.

During the reign of Mughal Emperor Humayun, there were anarchic conditions prevailing in Kashmir. Mirza Haider Dughlat, a Mughal general, entered the Valley in 1540 CE and ruled it for the next eleven years. After his death, Chaks again returned to power. In 1586 CE, during the reign of Emperor Akbar, the Mughals established full control over Kashmir. Akbar launched a comprehensive scheme for the rehabilitation of Kashmiri Hindus (now called Pandits), honorably in their native place. Akbar repealed the 'black tax' along with other taxes and fines imposed by the vicious Chak rulers. Jahangir and Shahjahan followed Akbar, and their rules were relatively peaceful, although the Pandits suffered subtle discrimination. Itquad Khan, one of Shahjahan's governors, broke all norms in his quest to convert Kashmiri Pandits to Islam. Aurangzeb, during his long reign of 49 years (1658-1707

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CE), administered Kashmir rather efficiently with the help of 14 governors. However, one of them, Iftikar Khan (1671-1675 CE), persecuted the Pandits to the fullest. The Pandits approached the ninth Sikh Guru, Teg Bahadur, with their complaints. The Guru told them to go and tell the emperor that "If he succeeds in converting Teg Bahadur, they would all voluntarily accept Islam". Since the Guru did not convert, he was martyred. The atrocities against the Kashmiri Pandits increased in intensity. Towards the end of the Mughal rule in 1720 CE, came another administrator named Mullah Abdul Nabi, also called Muhat Khan who was appointed as Shaikh-ul-Islam[4]. The Pandits continued to be tormented, their houses burnt, and property looted. Large numbers of them ran away. Those who remained behind lived in the most horrific conditions created by the Mullah and his gang of fanatics. This was the **Fourth Exodus** of Kashmiri Hindus from the Valley.

In 1746, the Valley faced a devastating flood followed by a horrible famine the following year. It is said that about three-fourths of Kashmir's population perished. Once again, some of the survivors left the Valley, with many dying during the journey. It was under these conditions that some locals invited the Afghan ruler, Ahmad Shah Abdali, to take over the Valley. Little did they know that they were inviting the advent of the darkest period in the history of Kashmir.

The Afghan rule in Kashmir (AD 1753-1819) was a period of cruelty, homicide and anarchy.[5] W. R. Lawrence calls it the "reign of brutal tyranny". Abdali's first chief Abdullah Khan Isk Aquasi, extracted rupees one crore from the local merchants. The Afghan army ransacked the houses of the common people and looted whatever they could find. Kashmir was then briefly ruled by a local Hindu, Sukh Jiwan Mal. In 1762, Abdali sent a force under the command of Nur-ud-Din Khan Bamzai and re-established Afghan rule. The next two administrators, Lal Khan Khattak and Faqir Ullah, were extremely tyrannical. They got hundreds of Kashmiri Pandits killed. Jabbar Khan, the last Afghan governor, persecuted the Hindus relentlessly. It is said that he ordered the Pandits to celebrate Shivratri in July instead of February. It so happened

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that there was a snowfall in July that year. The barbarous Afghans employed every wild, inhuman, primitive, ferocious, cruel and brutal method to suppress the Kashmiri Pandits. A pitcher filled with ordure (human excrement) was placed on the head of a Hindu and stones were pelted on it till it broke and the unfortunate bearer became covered with filth. Their brutality and atrocity crossed extreme limits when Hindus were tied up in gunny-sacks, two together, and drowned in the Dal Lake. The victimized Hindus were forced to flee the country or were killed or converted to Islam. Hindu parents disfigured their daughters by shaving their heads or cutting their noses and ears to save them from molestation. Any Muslim could jump on the back of a Hindu and take a ride. The atrocities led to the **Fifth Exodus** of the Kashmiri Pandits to faraway places like Delhi, Allahabad, etc. Many covered long distances on foot.

At the invitation of Birbal Dhar, Maharaja Ranjit Singh conquered Kashmir and established Sikh rule that lasted twenty-seven years (1819-1846 CE). During the Sikh rule, Hindus were treated better than Muslims. When Phula Singh, a Sikh commander, brought a canon to blow up the Shah Hamdan Mosque on the pretext that it was built over a Hindu temple, it was Birbal Dhar who interceded to save the mosque. Would a Kashmiri Muslim have done the same thing to save a Hindu temple? The Sikh rule was followed by the Dogra rule (1846-1947 CE). It was a glorious period of all-around development and reform. The period signalled the initiation of the modern history of the state. All the Dogra rulers, though Hindus, believed in and adhered to religious tolerance and harmony.

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, who had returned after studying law at Aligarh Muslim University, was one of the leading figures to raise the banner of revolt and organize a movement against the Dogra regime. He constituted the Srinagar Study Circle which later on took the shape of the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Muslim Conference. It was the same Muslim Conference that spearheaded the revolt against Maharaja Hari Singh and generated hatred towards the Hindu minorities of Kashmir. In 1949, in a speech in Reasi that one of the authors (AR) heard in person, Sheikh Abdullah, whose grandfather

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had converted to Islam during the Afghan rule, said that he was looking forward to the day when Pandits would be working as servants in Muslim households. Such was his mindset. The Britishers were playing their own dirty game of divide and rule. They propped up an agent Abdul Qadeer, an employee of theirs from Peshawar, and assigned him the uncoveted job of inciting the Muslim population against the Maharaja. Since Kashmiri Pandits belonged to the Hindu fraternity and the Maharaja was also a Hindu; therefore, it was assumed that the Hindu community should be held responsible for the continuance of the Hindu Maharaja's rule in Kashmir.

A conspiracy was hatched to loot and burn Hindu houses and property in Srinagar city on 29th July 1931. However, the conspiracy got leaked. Around the same time, a 'rebellion' was orchestrated in the Central Jail of Srinagar on 12-13 July 1931. Thousands of Muslim conference workers and other activists joined the prisoners who broke out of the jail. In accordance with the earlier chalked-out plan, the mobs, under the supervision and leadership of social, religious and political activists, looted Hindu properties and houses throughout the major business centers of Srinagar. In the police firing 21 of the rioters got killed. It is the day when the minority Hindu community became victims of the first genocidal act of the 20th century in Kashmir. The day is observed by Kashmiri Hindus as '*The Black Day*' and by Muslims as '*The Martyr's Day*'.

After independence and coming to power, Sheikh Abdullah, under the pretext of land reforms, enacted the 'Jammu and Kashmir Land Estate Abolition Act' whereby the lands of Hindus were confiscated and distributed among the Muslim peasants, resulting in about 20% of Kashmiri Pandits leaving the Valley in search of a livelihood. His administration adopted subtle and malicious approaches towards the Kashmiri Pandits. They were deprived of employment opportunities, and promotions and taunted at every step of their lives. Hindu temples were desecrated, looted and plundered. Minor girls of the Hindu community were forced to marry Muslims and embrace Islam[6].

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During 1953-1974 Sheikh Abdullah characterized India as an imperialist power endeavoring to subjugate the people of Kashmir. He asserted that his acceptance of the accession of Kashmir with India was his greatest blunder, for which history would never forgive him. Kashmiri Pandits became victims of social exclusion, economic squeeze and political marginalization. Besides hurling strong statements against the Government of India and Kashmiri Pandits, the Sheikh derided that the entire Indian army couldn't save the Hindus in Kashmir from the malevolence of Muslims.

The preceding series of actions and events caused a slow migration of Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley. Some 30,000 to 40,000 Hindu families are said to have moved out of Kashmir just between 1931 and 1941. Most of the people who left were from urban areas, almost all of them educated and with a firm commitment to succeed. They settled throughout India and even abroad and did not have much trouble finding employment. However, they paid a heavy price; they lost their ancestral homes forever. This became the **Sixth Exodus** of Kashmiri Pandits.

In 1974, the political scenario in Kashmir took a dramatic turn when the Indira-Sheikh Accord was signed by virtue of which the Sheikh became the Chief Minister of the State a second time after a lapse of 22 years.[7] Ignoring the vicious expectations he had created among the Muslims in Kashmir and his vigorous campaign for plebiscite, the sophisticated Sheikh began to speak the language of Indian nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism.

The hate-India virus, infused by Sheikh Abdullah and his cronies into the blood of the Muslim youth in Kashmir, however, had taken a firm hold on the masses. It was further exploited from time to time by other corrupt self-styled politicians for their own interests. The Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) initiated armed insurgency with the outright support of Pakistan's spy agency, the ISI. They carried out a huge disinformation and indoctrination campaign among the Kashmiri Muslim population. With their training camps

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located across the Line of Control, they infused anti-Hindu sentiments, convincing many of the need to cleanse the Valley of its Hindu population.

In 1986, the Chief Minister, Ghulam Mohammad Shah, decided to get a mosque constructed inside the new civil secretariat in Jammu, that too within the premises of an old Hindu temple. When the people of Jammu strongly objected to this, he came to the Valley and raised the slogan *'Islam khatre mein hai'* (Islam is in danger). This instigated the Valley Muslims, who turned their anger on Kashmiri Pandits, resulting in death and destruction, particularly in the Anantnag district of South Kashmir. Many Pandits were killed; their houses looted and burnt and scores of temples desecrated or destroyed. Slogans of *Azadi* could be heard everywhere. Jagmohan, the recently appointed governor, while touring some of the worst affected areas, was confronted by the Pandits, who were so scared that they demanded their immediate evacuation from the Valley. From 1986 to 1989, things got worse by the day. The *jihadis*, after getting indoctrinated and trained, had moved from sloganeering and stone-pelting to the use of lethal weapons like the automatic rifles (AK-47) and hand grenades. There was a mass frenzy among the Kashmiri Muslims who, after secession from India, wanted either independence or join with Pakistan. The biggest stumbling block, in their opinion, was the Pandits. Both State and Central governments ignored the gravity of the situation until the 'misguided youth', as they were called, became dreaded terrorists. The Valley Muslims called them 'militants'. Whatever designation one gave them, they had no value for life, particularly if it happened to be that of a Pandit. The Pandits, on the other hand, lived with the false assumption that they would be safe as long as Indian security forces were present in the state. In the Indian system of government, the security forces cannot take a unilateral decision for any action—the orders have to come from the civil administration, and they were in no mood to intervene.

The *jihadis* believed that the Pandits were a major hindrance to the path of total Islamization of the Valley. They planned to replace the secular and democratic set-up with religious theocracy or *Nizame-Mustafa*. In the summer

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of 1989, hand-written notes were either delivered to prominent Pandits or pasted on their doors. The notices said:

> "We order you to leave Kashmir immediately. Otherwise, your children will be harmed—we are not scaring you, but this land is only for Muslims and is the land of Allah. Sikhs and Hindus cannot stay here".

The tactic that they employed was to kill one and scare a thousand. It was 14 September 1989 when the terrorists drew the first blood: Tika Lal Taploo, an advocate and a prominent member of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), was gunned down near his house while he was on his way to the court. The next prominent member of the Pandit community, who was gunned down on 4 October, was Justice Nila Kant Ganjoo. His body lay in a pool of blood on a main street, and nobody dared to even cover it; such was the fear. December 1989-January 1990 was the darkest period for Kashmiri Pandits in the twentieth century.

The *jihadis* had a message for the Pandits, which gave them three options: *Raliv* (get converted to Islam), *galiv* (get killed) or *chaliv* (run away). Slogans such as the following were continuously broadcast from loudspeakers of every mosque in the Valley:

- *"Kashmir mein agar rehna hai Allah-ho-Akbar kahna hoga"*, (anyone wanting to live in Kashmir will have to convert to Islam);
- *"Kasheer banawon Pakistan, Bataw varaie, Batneiw saan"* (We will make Kashmir into Pakistan without the Pandit-men, but with Pandit women);
- *"Dil mein rakho Allah ka khauf; Hath mein rakho Kalashnikov"* (With fear of Allah ruling your hearts, wield a Kalashnikov);
- *"Yahan kya chalega, Nizam-e- Mustafa"* (We want to be ruled under Shariah).

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Hysterical mobs roamed the streets shouting bloodcurdling threats and warnings for non-believers. On December 8, Rubaiya Sayeed, daughter of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, the then Home Minister of India, was kidnapped by members of JKLF. She was released after the Farouq Abdullah-led government in the Valley freed 13 of their jailed members. This only helped to further bolden their stance. On 4 January 1990, a local Urdu newspaper, *Daily Aftab,* published a press release issued by *Hizb-ul-Mujahideen,* asking all Hindus to leave the Valley immediately. *Daily Al-Safa,* another local daily repeated the warning. Reports of killing Pandits continued to pour in from all parts of the Valley. Bomb blasts and sporadic firing by militants became a daily occurrence. There was a total failure of the government administration, including that of the police.

January 19, 1990, witnessed gruesome happenings, the likes of which had not been seen by the Pandits since the Afghan rule. Those that experienced the fear of that night are unlikely to forget it in their lifetime. For future generations, it will be a constant reminder of the brutality of Islamic radicals. President's rule was finally imposed in the state, and on that very day, Jagmohan arrived to take charge as the Governor for the second time. The Valley was reverberating with war cries and pro-Pakistan slogans. Tens of thousands of Kashmiri Muslims, including young and old, children and women, poured into the streets, shouting 'death to India' and 'death to *kafirs*'. The slogans continued till morning, making it clear to the Pandits that they were in the line of fire. Fear-stricken, the hapless Pandits had no option but to leave their ancestral homeland, properties, jobs, farms and places of worship. To the radical forces, it was perceived as the fruition of the Valley's ethnic cleansing. The sentiment was that Pandits had now been banished from their birthplace—not just for the immediate future, but for all times to come. Curfew was imposed to restore some semblance of order; it had little effect. The mosque pulpits continued to be used to exhort people to defy curfew and join the so-called *'Jihad'* against the Hindus.[8] Armed cadres of JKLF marched through the streets of the Valley to terrorize the minorities. On 21 January, two days after Jagmohan took

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charge as the Governor, the Gawkadal massacre took place, wherein the Indian security forces fired at protesters resulting in the death of at least fifty people.

Those who had organized such a show of force in the middle of the cold winter nights, had only one objective—to put the fear of death into the hearts of the already frightened Hindus. In this moment of collective hysteria, gone was the facade of the so-called secular, tolerant, cultured, peaceful and educated outlook of Kashmiri Muslims, which the Indian intelligentsia and the liberal media had made them wear for their own reasons. Most of the Kashmiri Muslims behaved as if they did not know who the Kashmiri Pandits were. This frenzied mass hysteria went on till Kashmiri Pandits' despondency turned into desperation. For the first time after the independence of India from British rule, they found themselves abandoned to their fate, stranded in their own homes, encircled by rampaging mobs. The brutal history of earlier genocides was repeated in every village and town of Kashmir.

Native Kashmiri Pandits saw the true face of intolerant and radical Islam. It represented the complete antithesis of the so-called *Kashmiriyat* that was supposed to define Kashmiri ethos. Mutual confidence between the two communities crumbled. A vast majority of Kashmiri Muslims forgot their ancient Hindu roots, traditions and customs, history and culture, legacy and heritage and flowed with the extremists and Pak-sponsored infiltrators. Another genocide was surely staring them in the face. By now, it became apparent to the Pandits that Kashmiri Muslims had decided to throw them out of the Valley, illegally occupy their property and capture their jobs. Such was the confidence in their success that some of them set their watches to Pakistan time and started trading in Pakistani currency. Wall posters in bold letters proclaimed Kashmir as the *'Islamic Republic of Kashmir'*. They made their final intent very loud and clear: 'Aim of the present struggle is the supremacy of Islam in Kashmir, in all walks of life and nothing else. Anyone who puts a hurdle in our way will be annihilated.

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Although more than 1,300 Kashmiri Pandits were brutally murdered, we are going to describe the gruesome details of only three of these. After reading these accounts, one would hesitate to call these killers 'human beings'. And all this was done in the name of a religion:

B. K. Ganjoo a telecommunication engineer lived with his wife in Chota Bazaar area of Srinagar. He had been warned that his name was on the 'militant's hit list'. On 19 March 1990, as he was planning to leave Srinagar the very next day, terrorists knocked on his door. Mr. Ganjoo hid himself in a drum used for storing rice in the attic while his wife opened the door. When the killers asked for Mr. Ganjoo, she told them that he had already left for his office. As they were leaving, one of their neighbors, who had seen Mr. Ganjoo hiding, told them where to find him. They returned, went straight to the attic, and shot him multiple times in the drum. When Mrs. Ganjoo pleaded with the killers to kill her too, they said, "There should be someone to mourn his death. Go ahead cook the (blood-soaked) rice and enjoy it".

The 64-year-old Sarwanand Koul '*Premi*' was a respected teacher, poet and scholar who lived in the village of Shali near Anantnag. He was an embodiment of true *Kashmiriyat* and preached love and non-violence. After his retirement, he taught for free for three months a year in two schools, one run by an Islamic and the other by a Hindu educational trust. On 28 April 1990, three armed terrorists entered his house and gathered all the family members in one room. They ordered the family to hand over all valuables, put these in a suitcase and asked Premi to carry it for them. The women pleaded to let him go, but they assured them that he would be back soon. His 28-year-old son, Virender, insisted on going along. They never came back. For two days, the father and son were put to extreme torture. Premi's forehead had been pierced with a thick nail, his body bore burn marks from cigarettes, his limbs were broken and his eyes were gouged out. His son, too, was

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similarly tortured. Finally, they were hanged from a tree, and bullets fired into them.

Ms. Girja Tiku was 28 and worked as a teacher in a school in Bandipora. After the exodus, she was living in Jammu and travelling to Bandipora once a month to collect her salary. During the visits, she used to stay with her cousin in Tikr village. The cousin had advised her that because of the worsening conditions, she should not come back for her salary. He himself had, in the meantime, moved to Jammu. However, she needed the money, and on 4 June 1990, she returned to Bandipora and stayed with one of her Muslim friends, who was also a colleague. After collecting her salary, she returned to her friend's house. Terrorists kidnapped her from there, while her friend made no attempt to thwart their evil action. They gang-raped her, cut open her abdomen, placed her on a band-saw and cut her into pieces.

Injured Kashmiri Pandits, when brought to the hospitals for treatment, were either allowed to die without administering treatment or were deliberately killed by some doctors who were sympathetic or in collusion with the *jihadis*. In some cases, blood was drained from injured Pandits and given to terrorists injured in a security operation.

These narratives bluntly illustrate the compulsions which led to the flight of the Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley. The gruesome murder of hundreds of innocent native Hindus in Kashmir caused their **Seventh Genocide** and the final forced mass exodus from Kashmir. Most of the Pandits left the Valley between January 1990 to April 1991. By the middle of 2002, nearly 60,000 families had registered in various parts of India. However, the *jihadis* were not to be satisfied until they wiped out the last vestiges of infidels from Kashmir. The job was now taken up by terrorist outfits like *Lashkar-e-Taiba* (LeT, Army of the Pure) and *Hizbul Mujahideen* (HM). In March 1997, seven Kashmiri Pandits living in Sangrampora village were killed by Muslim terrorists. Then on 25 January 1998, the terrorists struck Wandhama village, killing 23

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Pandits, including four children, nine women and ten men. Sikhs, who were often designated as '*Bal wale kafir*' (haired infidels), had this time been largely spared, perhaps to gain their support against India, the so-called common enemy (some Sikhs in Punjab were fighting for creation of Khalistan)! However, in March 2000, 35 Sikhs living in the village of Chittisinghpora were massacred by unknown gunmen who came dressed in Indian army fatigues.

There is no accurate figure available as to the total number of Kashmiri Pandits that left the Valley during the seventh exodus. Some estimates put the number at between 350 to 450 thousand. A 2010 report by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre of Norwegian Refugee Council suggested that over 2,50,000 Pandits have been displaced since 1990. According to the census figures, the population of Pandits in the Kashmir Valley was 15 percent in 1981; this fell to 5 percent in 1991 and to 0.01 percent after the recent exodus[9]. In 2010, only 808 Pandit families comprising 3,445 individuals were living in the Valley. The *jihadis* had essentially achieved their main objective of getting rid of the Hindu infidels. The Valley was now theirs to cherish as an Islamic state. To the statisticians, Pandits had lost only about 0.1 percent to the terrorist's bullets. So, in a strict sense, it is not a genocide like that of the Jews in Europe. They may be thriving in other parts of India or the world at large, but they have lost their ancestral land, they used to call home. They are truly '*Feeling Homeless*'.[10]

Genocide is not only about the numbers but about the intent of the crime. There was always a historical intent to ethnically cleanse Kashmir of Kashmiri Hindus. The fact remains that in 1931, there was no existence of Pakistan, and neither was there any Sultan or a Mughal ruling the Kashmir Valley. Sheikh Abdullah, in 1933 at Tragpora in North Kashmir, had said, "The task of the Muslim Conference and the Muslims was to turn out the Hindus from Kashmir". More recently (2018), Farooq Peer, Secretary of J&K Board of School Education, wrote in *The Kashmir Horizon*, "The Valley of Kashmir is indebted to the great saint (Mir Syed Ali Hamdani) for cleaning it from idol

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worship and blessing it with the gift of Islam". Such is the thinking of those that are responsible for charting the course of education in Kashmir and molding the thinking of the young generation. Whereas the main factor behind all the seven exoduses was the establishment of a theocratic Islamic state, the first five exoduses were caused by the actions of so-called foreign elements—the barbaric rulers. The sixth and seventh exoduses were locally motivated. Whether it was chanting slogans or the actual act of killing, these actions were largely carried out by the local Muslim youth. A Pandit teacher who had taught most of the youth of the locality was gunned down by some of the same students. A neighbor whose relationship Pandits had cherished looted their property, occupied their house and burnt it to the ground. Orchards owned by Pandits were cut down so that the owners would have no incentive to come back.

With the seventh exodus, when the Pandits moved out of the Valley, they designated themselves as 'migrants'. The local government too conveniently adopted this terminology. This was a great misnomer; a migrant willingly moves from one place to another, generally to ward off adverse climatic conditions or in search of better opportunities, only to come back when the conditions improve. Pandits were forced out of their homes because of a real threat to their lives. If they had chosen to go to another country and ask for asylum, they would be categorized as refugees. However, since they moved to other parts of India, the correct designation would be 'internally displaced persons' or IDPs. They are truly refugees in their own country.

Following the 1987 elections in J&K, reports after report were dispatched to the Central Government by Governor Jagmohan. The Central government, headed by Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister, failed to take cognizance of such reports and no appropriate action was taken. The Central government was seen as completely ineffective, wittingly or unwittingly, in handling the situation. There was a colossal failure of civil and police administration in the entire Kashmir Valley; kidnappings, bomb blasts, and selective killings had become the order of the day. The Home Ministry failed to take cognizance of

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confidential ground reports submitted by central intelligence agencies about the brewing sedition in Kashmir. The Valley youth had made a beeline to Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir to obtain training and weapons to accomplish their mission of internal subversion.

Between December 1989 and January 1990, when the conditions in the Valley got extremely unstable and the Pandits felt an imminent threat to their lives, they decided to get across the Banihal tunnel by any means available to them. Because of the fear of being noticed, some people left in the middle of the night. Governor Jagmohan announced that if the Pandits decided to leave the Valley, refugee camps had been set up for them in Jammu. He also assured the departing civil servants that they would continue to receive their salaries. He further stated that if they (Pandits) chose to stay back, he would not be able to guarantee their safety. According to the Jammu and Kashmir Center for Minority Studies, about 91 percent of the Pandits used private trucks and buses for their escape. Seven percent had private cars, while only in about two percent of cases were government vehicles used to facilitate the transport of Pandits out of the Valley. A very false narrative was put forth by the Muslim lobby that Governor Jagmohan had persuaded the Pandits to leave the Valley so the security forces could 'cleanse the place'.

During a visit in 1992 by one of the authors (AR) to the refugee camps in Jammu, he asked many residents if they had been in any way persuaded by Jagmohan to leave Kashmir. The unanimous response was 'no' with the explanation, "Do you expect people to leave their home and everything they own just because the governor asks you to do so?" Subsequently, the same author asked Jagmohan (when he came to Washington to participate in the first international symposium on Kashmir) the same question—his answer too, was an unequivocal 'no'. Wajahat Habibullah, who was the Divisional Commissioner of eight districts of Kashmir in 1990-91, in a conversation with AR, affirmed that the Pandits were driven out of Kashmir because of extreme fear. However, he felt that the refugee camps should have been set up in the Valley itself rather than in Jammu. Lastly, Gulam Mohamad Sofi, the

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seniormost journalist of Kashmir Valley, the editor of *Srinagar Times* newspaper and a Kashmir watcher, on the eve of the Holocaust Day (January 19) in an interview admitted publicly that the Pandits were exterminated under a preplanned conspiracy. He vehemently rejected the theory that Jagmohan had anything to do with the mass exodus.

For nearly six hundred years, the resident population of Muslims and Hindus had lived peacefully in the Valley of Kashmir. In spite of their religious differences, there was mutual respect for each other's religion. This was further enhanced with the advent of Sufiism in Kashmir. We can say with confidence that the Kashmiri Pandits have never physically harmed any Muslim, much less killed anyone. Most of the teachers in the Valley were Pandits and were responsible for teaching Muslim students. So were nearly all the physicians. One such gynaecologist in Pulwama had delivered nearly 6,000 babies of Muslim mothers. Many of them grew up to become terrorists responsible for killing their teachers and doctors. What caused this change? It was surely the indoctrination into religious fanaticism and the availability of weapons.

Pakistan made several misadventures in Kashmir but failed each time. The primary reason for their failure was the non-cooperation of the majority of Kashmiri Muslims until the former started the treacherous approach of terrorism. In spite of Kashmir being a border state with a hostile neighbor, until 1989, Indian security forces were not to be seen in and around residential areas. There were no killings of civilians until gun-toting terrorists started their rampage. It was the responsibility of the state to protect the life and property of its citizens. Did the Valley Muslims suffer in the process? The answer is a resounding 'yes'. The *jihadis* targeted many moderate Muslims or those who showed nationalistic or secular thinking. A jehadi was once asked in a televised interview if he would kill his father if the latter were to prevent him from undertaking acts of violence against the Pandits. His answer was, "Yes, I would". Even the common man suffered untold death and hardship. At the orders of the terrorist outfits, schools were closed and businesses shut, affecting the education and livelihood of the majority of the Valley Muslims. But then those who choose to live by the gun will die by the gun.

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In spite of the fact that some of the killers of Kashmiri Pandits had openly boasted about their crimes, none of them has thus far been tried in a court of law or sentenced for the heinous crimes they committed.

If Kashmiri Muslims could not live as part of a secular country, how do they expect the minority Hindus to live and survive in an Islamic state? Look at the demographic changes in three countries; Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. The Hindu population in all three countries has been reduced to an infinitesimally small minority, and the remaining ones are constantly harassed because there is no room for infidels in an Islamic state.

The Constituent Assembly of India in 1949 granted a special status to the J&K state, which subsequently came to be known as Article 370 under the heading, 'Temporary Provision'. In 1954, a Section was added to Article 35 as 35A (without the Parliament's approval), which allowed the State of J&K to have a separate state subject law, thereby barring Indian citizens other than the J&K residents from purchasing any property in the state. Some other provisions of the law applied were also the antithesis of the fundamental rights and the Human rights law guaranteed under the Constitution. However, all these laws and articles were abolished with effect from 5th August 2019 with the intervention of the Indian Parliament. Will it facilitate the return of the Kashmiri Pandits to their ancestral homes? Only time will tell.

Some Pandits took the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A as a positive sign and started going back to the Valley. Others were motivated by the offer of government jobs. For the *jehadis*, this would mean a failure of their plan of total Islamization. Consequently, they returned to their old tactic of killing one and, this time, scaring a dozen because there were no thousands left to be scared. Under these circumstances, will it ever be possible for the Kashmiri Pandits to go back to Kashmir?

The Pandits are welcome to Kashmir as visitors to spend their hard-earned money to sustain the economy of Kashmiri Muslims. They are given subtle

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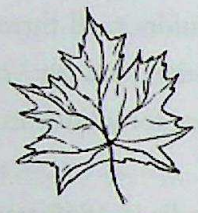
hints not to think of returning to settle permanently. It is very clear that if the Pandits are to return to Kashmir, they can be safe and secure only if they have the goodwill of the majority community, which is non-existent at the moment. Terrorism and radicalization are the greatest danger to democracy, social harmony, the future of current generations and the unity and integrity of the nation.



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Chapter 9

PANDITS AND THEIR UNIQUE CULTURE

Bansi L Pandit

Kashmiri Pandits, through centuries, despite their limited numbers and partial geographical isolation from the rest of the subcontinent, designed a distinctive cultural tradition of social and religious behavior. Being surrounded by the overwhelming beauty of nature comprising rivers, mountains, valleys, flowers and birds, they built up an exclusive cultural legacy which imbibes a harmonious outlook towards nature and society. Kashmiri Pandits' minds and consciousness abound in the love of people, nature and mysticism.

The snow-capped mountain peaks around the Valley evoked the image of Shiva, with the Ganga River coming out of His locks and gushing down in streams to the plains below, spreading life and beauty all around. Hence, Kashmir has, from ancient times, been known as the Land of Shiva (Shivapuri). Therefore, the worship of Shiva and the study of Shaivism are the predominant themes in the religious and philosophical practices of the Kashmiri Pandits.

Who Are Kashmiri Pandits?

The Hindus of Kashmir, popularly known as Kashmiri Pandits, are the ancient inhabitants of Kashmir Valley. Their ancestors lived in Kashmir over five thousand years ago. In ancient times, the Vedic Brahmins lived on the banks of River Saraswati and were known as Saraswat Brahmins. Although the exact date of the disappearance is in question, most modern scholars agree that the

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river dried up around 1900 BCE. A significant group of Saraswat Brahmins closer to the Northern Belt/Indus (*Sindhu*) left the area around 3000 BCE when a significant change of course of the river occurred. This period is considered the authentic era of their entry to Kashmir as *Sapatrishi Samvat* (currently 5098 corresponding to 2022 AD).[1]

When Saraswat Brahmins settled in Kashmir, they assumed the new honorific term *Bhattas*. There is no historical data to show when Saraswat Brahmins became *Bhattas*. The word *Bhatta* is derived from the Sanskrit term *Bhartri*, which means 'doctor, 'scholar' or 'intellectual'[2]. Exactly how and when the Kashmiri *Bhattas* eventually came to be known as present-day Kashmiri Pandits is not known. However, the following traditional story is believed to be the reason for this name change, which occurred during the Mughal period in India.

There lived a Kashmiri Bhatta named Jai Ram Bhan in the Valley during the reign of the Mughal Emperor Mohammad Shah (1719-1749 AD), writes Henny Sender[3]. Jai Ram Bhan was a poor man, and his widowed mother worked as a maid in the house of a *Jyotshi* (astrologer). The Jyotshi had predicted that Jai Ram would become rich and famous one day. Subsequently, Jai Ram left for Delhi to look for work. He could not find any work, and being frustrated, he sat at the gate of the palace, counting the people who were entering and leaving. One day, a favorite courtesan of the emperor could not be located, and Jai Ram quickly consulted his tables and concluded that the missing person must be inside the palace. A thorough search proved that Jai Ram was correct. The Mughal king Mohamad Shah was impressed by Jai Ram's talent, and he employed him in the palace. Jai Ram asked for another favor. He wanted the *Saraswat Brahmins* of Kashmir to be distinguished from the regular Brahmins of other parts of India. Jai Ram's wish was granted, and the king bestowed the title *Pandit* as a prefix to Kashmiri Saraswat Brahmins[4]. Initially, this prefix *Pandit* was meant for Kashmiri Saraswat Brahmins connected with the Moghul Empire, but later, it was used by all Kashmiri Brahmins.

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Origin of Religion

According to the *Nilamata Purana* and the Buddhist legends, Nagas are the earliest inhabitants of Kashmir. Before the arrival of the Saraswat Brahmins in Kashmir, Naga's snake cult or Naga worship prevailed in the Valley from a very early period. The literal meaning of the word *Naga* is 'snake' or a 'serpent,' and many scholars have established that the snake was, in fact, the totem of the Naga tribe. Various important springs (Kashmiri: *Nags*) in Kashmir, such as Nilanag, Sheshnag, and Anantnag, are considered the abodes of prominent Naga sages/chieftains which, as per the *Nilamata Purana*, are about five hundred in number. The widespread presence of these spring abodes of Nagas throughout the length and breadth of the Kashmir Valley, mostly as shrines, indicates their strong cultural impact on the Vedic Aryans from very early times.

According to the Ceylonese and Tibetan chronicles, King Ashoka sent the Buddhist monk Majjhantika to preach Buddhism in Kashmir in the third century BCE when the Naga King Arvala was the ruler of Kashmir[5]. Initially, Nagas vehemently opposed Majjhantika's teaching but convinced of the monk's divine powers, the Naga king accepted Buddhism[6]; this was followed by the large-scale conversion of Nagas into Buddhism. Buddhism in Kashmir entered its golden phase under the patronage of the Kushan king Kanishka and his successors until the end of the 1st century A.D. Buddhism was slowly overshadowed by the growing Vaishnava and Shaiva faith which became predominant in the Valley in the 7th century A.D.

Shaivism existed in some shape and form in the Valley from ancient times. Alongside Buddhism and Shaivism, Vaishnavism too flourished in Kashmir during the early Hindu period. Kalhana says that there was a shrine of Shiva Vijayesha in Kashmir even before King Ashoka's period. Besides Shiva and Vishnu, there was universal faith in the usual Hindu deities, particularly Ganesha, Skanda and Surya. According to Kalhana, an image of Vinayaka

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Bhimaswamin existed in Kashmir as early as the 5th century A.D. The stone images of Ganesha have been found in almost all the old temple ruins in the Valley. The discovery of the stone images and sculptures in the old temple ruins in the Valley shows that Skanda or Kumara's worship existed in early Kashmir[7].

Additionally, the most popular and universally respected shrines in earlier times in Kashmir are those of Goddess Durga in her various forms of *Sharika*, *Raginya*, *Sharda*, *Jwala*, *Kali* and *Varahi*. The *Rajatarangini* contains references to *Matricakras* or the mystic symbols of the various goddesses. Hundreds of images of Shakti in various forms have been found in old temple ruins in the Valley. We also find images of the goddess Lakshmi and Saraswati, along with the images of Vishnu, worshipped by the people of ancient Kashmir.

Today the dominant religion of Kashmiri Pandits is Kashmir Shaivism. To understand Kashmir Shaivism, it is necessary to refer to the two (of the many) popular thought streams of Indian philosophy: *Dvaita* (dualism, i.e., 'me and the God') and *Advaita* (non-dualism, i.e., 'the God in me'). Kashmir Shaivism is the name given to the latter. Kashmir Shaivism is a school of Shaiva philosophy developed in the Valley between the eighth and ninth centuries. The first teacher of this school was Tryambakaditya. Sangamaditya, the sixteenth descendant in the line of Tryambakaditya, later settled in Kashmir Valley around 800 AD. His fourth descendant, Somananda, extracted the principles of monistic Shaivism from the Shaiva scriptures and incorporated them in his work, *Shivadrishti*, the first philosophical treatise on Kashmir Shaivism. Later, many illumined sages, such as Vasugupta, Kallata, Utpaladev and Abhinavagupta, further refined this philosophy.

Kashmir Shaivism is also known as *Trika Shastra* since it is the philosophy of the triad (*Trika*) of Shiva, Shakti and *Nara*. Shiva is the Universal Being or Supreme Lord, Shakti is the Universal Energy, and Nara is the individual self. As a conscious and active principle in Kashmir Shaivism, the individual self is identical to the Supreme Lord. Due to the influence of innate ignorance

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(*Maya*), the individual forgets his divine nature, becomes liable to limitation and bondage, and thinks himself to be different from the Supreme Lord. Kashmir Shaivism removes the innate ignorance that separates the individual from the Universal. It teaches that the universe is just like its creator, absolutely real. This philosophy explains that God (Shiva) manifests as the universe, which is brought about by His motivating power (Shakti). Therefore, the existence of Shiva must be understood in the very manifestation of the universe and not in its negation.

Kashmir Shaivism is free from restrictions of caste, creed and gender. Any devout aspirant can access both the theory and practice of this philosophy. The practice of religion is considered more important than theological debates and discussions. Kashmir Shaivism does not advocate a life of *sannyasa* (renunciation) but recommends an active householder's life with the daily practice of yoga, meditation and worship. The use of outward symbols, such as yellow and orange robes, matted hair, and ashes, are considered unnecessary. Worldly enjoyment as a goal of worldly life is recognized and respected, but a spiritual path aimed at harmonizing *bhukti* (worldly enjoyment) and *mukti* (liberation) is advocated. Kashmir Shaivism does not promote suppression of one's emotions and instincts but provides a spiritual path aimed at their sublimation towards the ultimate goal of *mukti* or *moksha* (spiritual freedom). Trika comprises of four systems:

- *Pratyabhijna* —an act by which one realizes and reunites with the original state of Universal Consciousness.
- *Kula*—is Shiva's power (Shakti), manifesting as the universe. The central philosophy of this school is that the world is an extension of Shiva and directly connected with Him.
- *Krama*—means 'spiritual progression' or gradual refinement of one's consciousness through the practice of concentration; and
- *Spanda*—means 'subtle movement' or 'subtle vibration'. The soul reveals its power of movement (*spanda shakti)* through intense concentration, leading to unbroken awareness, i.e., Self-realization.

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Religious Practices

Kashmiri Pandits primarily worship Shiva and Shakti. Other deities (gods and goddesses) of the traditional Hindu pantheon are worshiped as manifestations of Shiva and Shakti. Shiva is the Supreme Lord of the universe, and Shakti, the Universal Mother Goddess, is his eternal companion. *Bhairavas* and *Ganas* are his divine companions, and they are also worshipped with him on important festivals, such as Shivaratri. There are numerous Shiva shrines in Kashmir, such as Amareshvara, Vijayeshvara, Sureshvara, Harsheshvara, Mahadeva, Bhuteshvara and Haramukheshvara. The worship of Shakti in the form of goddesses such as Sharika (Hari Parbat), Raginya (Tulamula), Kali (Khankah and Hari Parbat), Jwala Mukhi (Khrew), Shailaputri (Nagabal, Baramulla), Tripura (Devsar, Kulgam), Jyeshtha Devi (between Shankaracharya and Chasma Shahi) are very popular in Kashmir.

Puja (worship) Rituals

Regular *puja* or worship forms an integral part of the religious life of the Kashmiri Pandits, both at the individual and at community levels. At the individual level, they perform daily puja in their homes. Most homes have a puja room (*Thokur-Kuth*) where a person performs puja alone or with his family. This practice is still followed when a room is available. A *Shivling* and various *murtis* (images and icons of deities) are used for worship. Vaishnavites use *Shaligram*—a rare ammonite fossil generally found in the Gandaki River in Nepal, for worship. During the Muslim rule, when temple worship had become a risk for the Hindus and could not be performed for fear of being identified as Hindus and getting killed, people made *Parthishvar* representing a Shivling and other images made from pure clay obtained from sacred places, or hillsides. This practice was handy as these images could easily be consigned to the river after worship without attracting attention.

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The daily pujas offered in homes have been simplified in modern times. Detailed procedures and scriptures are followed for special pujas at individual and community levels. The pujas offered on sacred dates, special occasions, *samskaras*, festivals and the celebration of the birthdays of the saints etc., are generally elaborate and symbolic in structure and content. The basic ritualistic structure is more or less similar to the sixteen-step puja commonly followed by Hindus. The puja starts with the usual preliminary steps of sipping water for self-purification (*achmana*), controlling breath (*pranayama*), recitation of the *Gayatri Mantra*, and contemplation of the deity (*dhyana*); this is followed by worship of Ganapati and consecration of the ritual objects like the pot (*kalasa*), the conch (*shankha*), the bell (*ghanta*) and the lamp (*dipa*). After the purification of self, the ritual site, and the ritual objects, the main puja begins with invoking the deity to be worshiped.

At the community level, Kashmiri Pandits regularly performed congregational worship at temples and shrines such as Hari Parbat and Kheer Bhawani. Following their recent forced departure from the Valley, they have carried their favorite deities with them to the places where they have taken shelter and have built replicas of some of their popular shrines.

Sacrificial Food

Offering sacrifices of food and gifts to please and appease gods and supernatural beings is a major constituent of Kashmiri Hindu rituals. Special occasions and festivals have been set apart to invite, placate and feast deities in the hope of gaining their favor. Besides the fire sacrifices (*Havans*) at which barley, rice, sesame seeds, different kinds of dried fruits and molasses or sugar candy, clarified butter (*ghee*), milk, etc., are offered as oblations, the most common offering made to gods is *taher* (rice flavored with turmeric powder and *ghee* or oil). Sacrificial food like *khichari* and fish and rice is offered to appease Kubera, the Lord of the Yakshas, and the *Grhadevata* (the deity of the

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house). Non-vegetarian dishes are offered as a sacrifice to deities such as Bhairava, Kali, Jwala and Tripura. Special days are dedicated to their worship.

Samskaras

Samskaras are the initiation rituals often called 'rites of passage' because they are performed at different stages of life, from birth to death. The *Grihya Sutras* are sacred Hindu texts containing information on performing rites and rituals. Different rishis have authored many different *Grihya Sutras*. Kashmiris use only *Grihya Sutra*, composed by Laugakshi Muni, which is called Laugakshi *Grihya Sutra*[8]. There are forty *samskaras* prescribed by ancient sage Gautama of which Hindus outside Kashmir practise sixteen. In the Kashmiri Pandit tradition, there are 24 *samskaras* prescribed by Laugakshi Muni, of which Kashmiri Hindus practice only a few essential samskaras, as discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

In the olden days, samskaras formed the core of religion for most Kashmiri Hindus, but modernization and other socio-economic and political factors have greatly changed their way of life and ritual behavior. Many samskaras have been done away with, while many have undergone substantial modifications. The 1990 exodus of Hindus from Kashmir and their dispersal to different parts of India and the world has further complicated the situation, forcing them to perform only the most essential Samskaras in a much-abbreviated form. As things stand today, of the 24 traditional samskaras, only *Kahanether* (baby's purification and name-giving), *Zarakasai* (male child's first hair-cutting), *Yajnopavit* (the sacred thread investiture), *Vivah* (wedding), *Antyeshti* (funeral rites) and *Shraddha* (post-funeral rite) are considered as essential by Kashmiri Hindus under the conditions in which they are forced to live now. Furthermore, the acute shortage of professional priests has made the performance of even these few ceremonies difficult.

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The ***Kahanether*** ceremony of Kashmiri Pandits corresponds to the *namakarana samskara,* as naming the newborn child is essential. In Kashmiri, *Kah* means eleven, and *nether* means *nakshatra* (constellation). Thus, *Kahanether* celebrates *the nakshatra* of a child on the eleventh day after birth. According to scriptures, the period of impurity (*hoontsh* in Kashmiri) caused by birth expires at the end of ten days, and thus *Kahanether*, the purification ceremony, is observed on the eleventh day. On this day, a *havan* is performed for the child's long and prosperous life. *Kheer* (rice cooked in milk and sugar) is prepared as an offering to the gods and is distributed as *naivedya* among relatives, friends, and neighbors who are treated to a sumptuous feast on the day.

Zarakasai is the hair-cutting ceremony (or the first tonsure of the male child) performed when a boy is about three to four years old. A *havan* is performed, and the boy's head is shaved, leaving only the *Shikha* or *choti* in place, and after the *havan*, guests are treated to a feast.

Yajnopavit* or *Upanayana (*Mekhal* in Kashmiri) is the sacred thread ceremony —one of the most important ceremonies in the life of a Kashmiri Pandit. It was performed when the boy was ready to go to a boarding school. Nowadays, it is often performed just before marriage. The ceremony begins with *garnavai* (house cleaning) and is followed by *manziraat* (applying henna to the boy's hands) and *divagon*. An essential purification ceremony, exclusive to the Kashmiri Pandit tradition, it is performed for both the *upanayana* and *vivah* (marriage) ceremonies. The word *divagon* may have been derived from the Sanskrit term *devcigamana,* meaning the arrival of the gods[9]. The ceremony is performed to invoke the presence of the gods, especially Ganesha and the *Sapta-matrkas* or seven mother goddesses, to bless the individual to be initiated in the *yajnopavit* or to be married. *Divagon* begins with a ritual bath called *kani-shraan*. Four young unmarried girls hold a thin muslin cloth spread over his head at its four ends as a fifth one pours water from a pitcher. These five unmarried girls represent the *pancha kanya* or 'five virtuous women'— Ahilya, Draupadi, Tara, Sita, and Mandodari. These days the officiating priest

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himself usually pours the water. A *havan* or fire sacrifice is performed on the occasion amidst the chanting of relevant mantras.

On the day of the main ceremony of *Upanyana*, the sacred thread (*yoni* in Kashmiri) comprised of three strings is put around the boy's neck by his *guru*, and the boy is henceforth a twice-born Brahmin. At the ceremony, the boy begs alms (Kashmiri: *abeed*) for his *guru* from relatives and friends. Only vegetarian food is cooked and served during the entire ceremony. On the last day, another ceremony (*Kushal homa*) is performed to mark this important event's safe and pleasant termination. Meat is cooked on this day.

Vivah or wedding (*khandar* in Kashmiri): Marriages between boys and girls were generally arranged before they passed their 20th year. Matching of the horoscopes of the boy and the girl was a key factor. Inquiries were instituted regarding the social status, family history and economic position of the boy's family. The boy's appearance, health and education generally outweigh all other considerations in modern times. The *manziraat* and *divagon* follow the same ritual as the *yajnopavit*. On the wedding day, the bridegroom is dressed in an *achkan*, a pajama, and he puts on a colored turban. A procession is formed in the courtyard of his home, where he stands on a *vyug*, an outline of mystic signs drawn in lime and colored clay. The eldest lady then comes and waves lighted lamps around his head while the assembled relations sing and shower coins and flowers over him. The bridegroom is next taken to the bride's house in a procession. Following the procession, he may go in a car or ride a horse. Outside the bride's home, too, the *vyug* ceremony is performed, and the wedding party is treated to a sumptuous feast. Next, the *lagan* (nuptial ceremony) commences and is officiated by the family priests of both families. The couple, hand-in-hand, walks seven times around the sacred fire while the priests recite *mantras* and explain the vows of the marriage.

A unique and concluding ritual of a Kashmiri Pandit marriage is called *posha puzaa (worship with flowers)*. The couple is made to sit under the cover of a canopy of a red shawl, and the parents of the bridegroom and close relatives

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shower flower petals on them. They regard the bride and bridegroom as embodiments of Shiva and Parvati. Food is served to the couple, who both eat from the same plate. The marriage ceremony itself used to take six to eight hours. The bride and the groom are now blessed by all present, wishing them a firm and loving relationship and long, happy, healthy and prosperous married life. After the *lagan,* the bride and groom return to the latter's home. When they arrive at the groom's house, the bride is first shown the kitchen and the temple. She is then comfortably seated while the women burn *izband* (harmala or *espand* in Persian) to ward off evil spirits and continue singing. Though the dowry system is not prevalent among Kashmiri Pandits, the bride is given some essential household items. During the first year of marriage, the bride's parents send her several presents at festivals and on her husband's birthday.

Antyeshti or funeral rites. *Antyeshti* means 'last-sacrifice' and refers to the funeral rites for the dead among Hindus. Most of the ceremonies on the death of a Kashmiri Pandit are similar to those performed by the Brahmins in the rest of India, though these are more elaborate in Kashmir. The dead body is washed and wrapped in a white unstitched shroud or *kafan.* A brief *shraddha* (ceremony in honor of the dead) is performed before the dead body is carried for cremation, which is performed on the same day if a person dies before sunset. The funeral pyre is lit by the son of the deceased or by the nearest male relative. The ashes are collected in an urn and subsequently immersed in the river Ganges or a local body of water. For the next ten days, *shraddha* ceremonies are performed at a riverbank every morning, and on the 10th day, the son of the deceased shaves his head to indicate the end of mourning. More shraddhas are performed on the 11th and 12th days and then every month for the first year.

Religious Precautions and Prohibitions

Kashmiri Pandits observe some taboos associated with various life occasions such as pregnancy, childbirth, adolescence, marriage and death. Some are simply precautionary steps to prevent dangers while others are observed to

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ward off evil influences. Some taboos are associated with certain days or months believed to be unlucky or inauspicious when certain activities are not performed. Omens and inauspicious configurations of the stars belong to this category[10]. Some taboos are connected with food, followed mostly to protect a person from evil influence or impurity that can be physical, moral or spiritual. There are some taboos that the orthodox Kashmiri Pandits keenly observe in the ritual practices, such as fasting on certain days, abstaining from eating meat on particular days or occasions, notions of purity and impurity in cooking and prohibition or prescription of particular kinds of food. Thus, foods originally grown in the Valley were alright to use during religious occasions but the ones introduced from the plains were not allowed. Whereas lamb and fish are commonly used, chicken and eggs are forbidden, and so are onions and garlic. Stories have been weaved to justify these regulations. Some of these made sense in the olden days but are not relevant anymore. One example is that of *hoanch* following birth or death in a family. Both these events were probably associated with unclean conditions. Visiting relatives and friends would not eat or drink until the day clothes were washed and the house cleaned. The belief that gods indicate what is to come in the future through the medium of natural phenomena has an important place in the pattern of ritualistic behavior of the Kashmiri Pandits, especially astrology, with which they appear to be obsessively preoccupied[11].

Besides liturgical utterances (*mantras*) and acts, gods are also sought to be pleased and entertained in a Kashmiri Hindu ritual by song and dance to evoke their generosity and benevolence in the form of material prosperity, success and protection from misfortune. Many of the above basic characteristics and patterns of Kashmiri Pandit rituals are common to rituals practised by Hindus elsewhere in India.

Festivals

Hindus did not traditionally emphasize popular festivals in Kashmir, such as *Holi, Lohri* and *Basant Panchami*. Here a place of pre-eminence has always

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been accorded to Shivratri, with the highest religious significance. Before the Saraswat Brahmins arrived in Kashmir, the forest-dwelling and meat-eating tribes, the *Nagas, Yakshas* and *Pishachas*, lived there in the mountains. After the Brahmins settled in the Valley, these tribes would come down to the lower regions during the hard winter months in search of food and harass them. The Brahmins offered them sacrificial food like *khichari*, fish and rice during these months to appease them. This practice, reminiscent of the mixing and commingling of races in pre-historic Kashmir, gave rise to peculiar festivals such as *Shishur, Gaada Bhatta*, and *Khyachi Maavas*, which Kashmiri Pandits have been celebrating to this day during the winter months. In most of these festivals, specially prepared non-vegetarian food is offered to the *Ghar Devata* (house deity) and distributed among the neighbors. Following are a few of the many popular festivals celebrated by Kashmiri Pandits. (Refer to *Rituals, Ceremonies & Kashmiri Pandit Festivals* for details on other festivals celebrated by Kashmiri Pandits)[12].

Sonth and Navreh: Sonth brings forth the spring season. *Navreh*, the New Year's Day in the Kashmiri Lunar calendar, is celebrated on the first day of the bright fortnight of Chaitra (March/April). *Navreh* is derived from the Sanskrit *Nava Varsha*, meaning 'New Year'. Kashmiri Pandits observe a unique custom on this occasion. The evening before the day of *Navreh*, the housewife fills a steel plate (Kashmiri: *thaal barun)* with rice, a cup of yogurt, a daffodil, walnuts, a pen, a coin, the new *Panchang*, crystal sugar, salt, clarified butter, baked rice-flour bread and *wuy-ladar* (rhizomes of an aquatic plant). These materials symbolize auspiciousness, wealth and prosperity. The family views the ensemble first thing in the morning as a good omen. People wear new clothes and offer puja at home and in temples. The family celebrates the day by preparing traditional dishes and other delicacies. Yellow rice (*taher*) is cooked and served after puja. Outings are also organized to Mughal gardens and almond orchards (*badam vare*).

Zetha Aetham, or *Jyeshta Ashtami*, is a very auspicious day for Kashmiri Pandits. It is observed on the eighth day of Shukla Paksha (bright fortnight) of

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Jyeshtha (May/June). This festival is dedicated to the Goddess Raginya (Kheer Bhawani: *Ishta Devi* or the Presiding Deity and a manifestation of Goddess Durga) at Tulamula. Although many devotees visit this shrine regularly every month on the eighth day of the bright fortnight, *zetha aetham* is a special annual festival. There is a mystery associated with the holy spring of Tulamula in that it changes color from time to time, reflecting the destinies of the Valley's inhabitants. Some scientists believe that the color change is because of changes in pH caused by bacterial fauna.

Swami Vivekananda went to Kashmir in 1898 and visited many temples and pilgrimage sites there. On September 30, 1898, he visited the Kheer Bhawani temple, where he spent about a week performing daily *Havan* and worshipping the Mother Goddess. One day while worshipping, the thought of the ruination and desecration of the temple by the Muslim invaders left him distressed at heart. He thought that the Divine Mother had been manifesting Her presence there for untold years. "How could the people have permitted such sacrilege without offering resistance? I would never have allowed such a thing if I had been here. I would have laid down my life to protect the Mother," he thought. Thereupon he heard the voice of the Mother Goddess saying, "What if nonbelievers should enter My temple and defile My image? What is that to you? Do you protect Me, or do I protect you?"

Shravana Punim or *Shravana Purnima* is observed on the full moon day of *Shravana* (usually in August). On this occasion, devotees undertake a long and tedious pilgrimage to the world-famous Amarnath cave for *darshan* (viewing) of the Ice-Lingam (a stalagmite formed due to the freezing of water drops that fall from the roof of the cave). Devotees also visit Shiva shrines, such as Thujwar in Anantnag, Harmukh in Khunmuh and Shankaracharya temple in Srinagar.

Pun Deon. Offering *Pun* is an annual festival that most Kashmiri families celebrate in *Bhadrapada* (August/September). In its present form, *Pun* is much akin to the *Satyanarayana puja* performed by Hindus in many parts of north

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India - particularly so far as the story narrated on that day is concerned. Outside the Valley, this festival is known as '*Ganesh Chaturthi*' but is uniquely celebrated by Kashmiri Pandits by preparing *roth* (a special thick fried sweet bread). The family members sit near a decorated pot (symbolizing the *Pun*-deity), and the lady of the house narrates a story of how *Beeb Garbah Maej* (personification of the goddess) protects her devotees who perform this *puja.*

Gada Bhata (fish and cooked rice). This festival is observed on any Tuesday or Saturday of the dark fortnight in the lunar month of Pausha (December/January). Fish is specially cooked on this occasion. As a part of the ceremony and after a brief puja, a *thaali* full of rice and fish is specially prepared for the *Ghar-Devata* (house-deity) and placed at a clean place in *braer kaeni* (attic) of the house. The plate is placed under an up-turned wicker basket properly supported from the floor so that the plate remains visible but covered. A glass of water and a small lamp (terracotta oil lamp in the olden days) is placed next to the plate, and the room lights are turned off. Some households also place a piece of raw fish on the plate. Following this offering to the *Ghar-Devata*, dinner is served to all present. The following day, the deity's leftover food is fed to the birds and animals.

Khyachi Maavas or *Khichdi Amavasya* (also called *Yaksha Amavasya*) is observed on the last day of the dark fortnight of Pausha (December/January). This festival is dedicated to the '*Yaksha*,' belonging to a forest-dwelling hostile tribe that lived in Kashmir. It was sort of 'protection money' to ensure the safety of the Brahmins. In the evening of this day, *khichri* (a porridge) is made by boiling rice, *moong* (green lentils), turmeric, pepper and salt, to which *ghee* (clarified butter) is added later. Some *khichri* is then placed in an earthen pot or an improvised plate made of dry grass. The plate is placed on the top of the compound wall at nighttime for the *Yakshas.* A grass ring is made and decorated with *sindur* (lead oxide), sandalwood, uncooked rice and flowers and is worshipped as a symbol of the cosmos.

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Shivaratri. Shivaratri is the major socio-religious festival of Kashmiri Pandits and is celebrated on the thirteenth day of the dark half of the month of *Phalguna* (February-March) and not on the fourteenth day as is done by the rest of the Hindus in India. Pandits popularly call Shivaratri *Herath*, a word derived from the Sanskrit *Hararatri*, meaning 'the night of Hara', another name for Shiva. The religious portion of Herath is known as *Vatuk* puja.

For Hindus in general, Shivratri is a celebration of the union of Shiv and Shakti and the creation of life. For Kashmiri Pandits, it has significant importance in worshiping the *Vatuknath Bhairav*. *Bhairav*, as per Kashmir Shaivism, is a being who, through his *sadhana* (meditation) has risen to a status just next to Shiv. *Bhairavs* have three powers: *shreshti* (manifestation), *stehti* (maintenance), and *samhara* (withdrawal). Supreme Shiv has two additional attributes: *vilaya* (concealment) and *anugraha* (divine grace). Eight *Bhairavs* have achieved that status, and in Kashmir, we have eight temples dedicated to them. So, on this day, Kashmiri Pandits worship *Vatuknath* (the boyish) *Bhairav* together with the Shiv-ling, and Bhagwan Shankar and Mata Parvati with their *Shiv-ganas* (His attending chiefs).

The word "linga" means "the form or the symbol". The traditional *Vatuk* puja includes many pots arranged in a specific way (Fig.1): a *kalash*, a large narrow-necked pot (*Notu*) filled with whole walnuts soaked in water represents Shiv; another smaller pot (*Ram gud*) represents Shakti or Parvati, an open mouthed-large pot (*Dull*) represents the *Vatuknath Bhairava*, several small pots represent the Shiv-*ganas*, *Ksetrapals* (guardians of the quarters), and the *sani potul* (linga the symbol of Shiva).

Kashmiri Pandits used to celebrate the Shivratri festival over 23 days. The first six days (up to *Hurya Shayam and Satam*) are dedicated to cleaning and decorating the entire house and buying puja articles. On the tenth and eleventh days (*Dyara Daham* and *Gada Kah*), ladies visit their parents' houses and return to their own homes with new clothes, a new *Kangri* (fire-pot) with a silver spatula or *chalan*.

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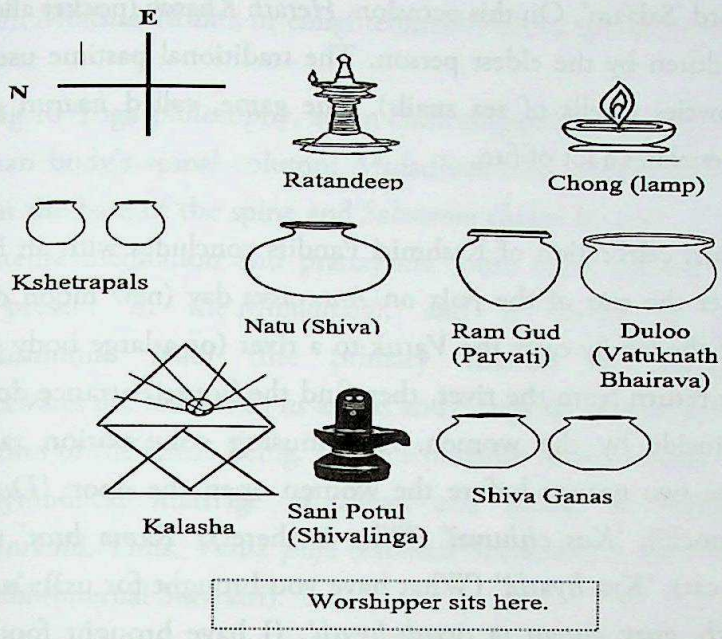

Fig 1: Vatuk pooja setup. The traditional Sani Potul is substituted by a Shivling

The thirteenth day or *Heracha Truvah*, is the day of the main Shivaratri puja. All the family members assemble in the puja room for the special puja, which is performed traditionally under the directions of the family priest. It is customary for the eldest family member to observe a fast on this day. This elaborate puja lasts several hours. Prescribed vegetables and fish and meat are cooked according to the family tradition. All cooked items are first offered to *Vatuknath* and poured into the *Dull.* Traditionally, some Kashmiri Hindus have used this festival to offer food to ghosts and goblins, giving rise to non-vegetarian foods offered to the deity on this occasion. This practice has now disappeared and most Pandits, if not all, now prepare only vegetarian foods on this day.

The 14th day of the celebration is *Shiva Chaturdashi*, popularly called 'Salaam' (a respectful greeting used by Muslims). On this day, friends from the Muslim community in Kashmir used to visit their Hindu friends and neighbors to offer good wishes. Also, beggars, bards, and street dancers would come to receive

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gifts in cash and kind on this festive occasion, saluting the head of the family with the word 'Salaam'. On this occasion, *Herath Kharch* (pocket allowance) is given to children by the eldest person. The traditional pastime used to be a game of cowries (shells of sea snails). The game, called *haarun gindun* in Kashmiri, generates a lot of fun.

The Shivaratri celebration of Kashmiri Pandits concludes with an interesting feature. After the end of the puja on *Amavasya* day (new moon day), male members of the family carry the *Vatuk* to a river (or a large body of water). Upon their return from the river, they find the house entrance door bolted from the inside by the women. An amusing conversation takes place between the two groups before the women open the door: '*Dubh-dubh*' (Knock, knock!); '*Kus chhuva*?' (Who is there?); '*Rama bror*' (It is me, Rama, the cat); '*Kya hyath*?' (What have you brought for us?); '*ann-hyath, dhana-hyath, gury gupan ta orzuh-hyath*'. (I have brought food, wealth, cattle and good health for you). Then the door is opened, the walnuts are shelled and, together with shortcakes made from rice flour, are distributed as *prasad*. Next day, the prasad is distributed among friends, relative, and neighbors. The residual items from the puja are immersed in the river (or lake) on the day of *Teela Aetham*, which is held on the 8th day of the bright fortnight. It signifies the culmination of the Shivaratri festivities and bidding farewell to the cold weather by burning the kangris.

Spiritual Essence of Shivaratri: 'Shiva' means 'Consciousness,' and '*ratri*' means night or darkness, which is a metaphor for 'rest'. Hence *Shivratri* means 'Consciousness at rest,' i.e., '*samadhi*'. Quoting a hymn from Utpaladeva's *Shivastotravali*, Swami Lakshman Joo says that the traditional celebration of Shivaratri is external Shivaratri. The internal Shivaratri, the real Shivaratri, is the rise of *chitānanada* (God-consciousness), which occurs in *samadhi* when the incoming breath, the outgoing breath, and all thoughts have ceased[13]. In *samadhi*, the Self shines in its infinite light (*Prakash*) and glory; no external sun or moons shine there, and it is the real Shivaratri. The annual celebration of Shivaratri is thus a reminder that the goal of human life is to become one with

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Shiva. This attainment of oneness with Shiva is also called Self-Realization (*samadhi*), *Moksha*, *Mukti*, or enlightenment—a true celebration of Shivaratri.

According to Yoga philosophy, seven *chakras* (psychic centers) are located in the human body's spinal column: *Muladhara* (also called *Kundalini Chakra*) located at the base of the spine and *Sahasrara chakra* located at the top of the head. Intense meditation and pranayama rouse the *Kundalini Shakti* (latent energy present in the *Muladhara*), and it begins to rise upward within *Sushumna Nadi* (the primary channel of energy). *Kundalini Shakti* activates the chakras in its ascent and brings about total purification and rejuvenation of the entire being. When *Kundalini Shakti* reaches the *Sahasrara chakra* (symbolical marriage of Shiva and Shakti in mythology), one attains *samadhi*. Thus, *Vatuk puja* (external Shivaratri) is the ritualistic equal of *Samadhi* (internal Shivratri).

Caste system

The classical caste system among Hindus in India did not exist in Kashmir. Further, Buddhism, the earliest organized religion in Kashmir, did not encourage the establishment of any caste system. During Muslim rule, Hindus suffered so much religious persecution that once only eleven families of the Brahmins remained in the Valley. The rest were killed, converted to Islam, committed suicide, went about in disguise, or left the country for good[14]. During the long and peaceful reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, most Kashmiri Hindus returned to their original homeland. Those who returned to the Valley assumed the appellation of *Bhanmasi* in contradistinction to *Malmasi*, who never left the Valley. The *Malmasis* observe the 'lunar' and the *Bhanmasis*, the 'solar' form of the astronomical calendar. They, however, have no restrictions regarding intermarriage, etc.

To preserve their cultural heritage during Muslim rule, Kashmiri Pandits originated a tradition to train and educate their daughter's eldest son in Sanskrit, who would then become a Sanskrit scholar and act as the family's *Purohit*

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(priest) to take care of the religious affairs. The *purohits* were called *Bhachibhats* (those who study *Bhasha*, i.e., Sanskrit). The name changed to *Gaur* with time. The remaining Hindus were called *Karkuns* (derived from the Persian word *Karinda*, meaning Persian-educated white-collar worker who enters government service). The tradition began without any restrictions for either of the two groups, but over time the *Gaurs* and *Karkuns* became two sub-casts of Hindus in Kashmir, intermarriage between the two being restricted[15].

Two other groups that were sometimes considered separate were *Buhur* and *Purib*. The word '*Buhur*' in Kashmiri means grocer, and '*Purib*' means 'easterner,' i.e., one from the east. It appears most likely that these sub-groupings, which have disappeared now, reflected the business professionals in the case of *Buhur* and ancestry in the case of *Purib*, which could be traced to an immigrant from eastern India.

Gotras

In Hindu culture, *gotra* refers to descendants of the *Saptarishis* (seven ancient Vedic sages) in an unbroken male lineage. The Saptarishis are Atri, Bhardwaj, Gautama, Jamadagni, Kashyapa, Vashishtha, and Vishvamitra. For example, if a person says he belongs to the Bhardwaj *gotra*, he traces his ancestry to the ancient Rishi Bhardwaj. *Gotra* was originally instituted to identify one's ancestors and respect them through invocations during various religious rituals and ceremonies. Later, *gotra* was extended to other aspects of Brahmin life, such as marriage and temple worship. In Hindu tradition, marriage is not allowed within the same *gotra* to avoid 'genetic inbreeding'[16].

The number of present-day gotras of Kashmiri Pandits has multiplied to 199 because of the following reasons[17]: The descendants of the above gotra Rishis also started new family lineage or new *gotras*, by intermarriage with other Brahmins, inspired by a saint whose name they bear as their gotra. Thus *gotra* became a status symbol. It became necessary to include new Rishis as

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progenitors or head of a *gotra* who had gained prominence among their followers or as purohits.

A distinctive feature of the present-day Kashmiri gotras is that women head some of the *gotras* instead of males. (Refer to *Who Are Kashmiri Pandits?*) for a detailed list of the gotras of *Malmasis* and *Bhanmasis* associated with Kashmiri Pandits' Surnames)[18].

Kashmiri Language

'Kashmiri' is the language of Kashmir Valley. The origin of this language is shrouded in mystery because the research on its linguistic aspects is inadequate and incomplete[19]. There are essentially two views on the origin of the Kashmiri language. The first is that Kashmiri developed like other Indo-Aryan languages (e.g., Hindi and Punjabi) out of the Indo-European family of languages and, thus, may be considered a branch of Indo-Aryan languages.

The second view is that Kashmiri belongs to a separate group (within the Indo-Aryan branch of Indo-European) called the Dardic or the Pisacha group of languages; the other two members of the group are Indo-Aryan and Iranian. According to S. Chatterji, "...Kashmiri, despite a Dardic substratum in its people and its speech, became a part of the Sanskritic culture-world of India so that one might say that the Kashmiri language is a result of a very large over-laying of a Dardic base with Indo-Aryan elements"[20].

Grierson (a European linguist in British India, attributes the Kashmiri language to the Dardic group. He claims that Kashmiri was developed in Dardistan, the mountainous region between the North West of Punjab and the Pamir. Excluding Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit words, the remaining words are Dardic or Paschachi. Kafiri (spoken in the west of Chitral), Shina (spoken in Gilgit), Kashmiri, Kishtwari and Kohistani belong to this group. Grierson says that Kashmiri has immensely and for centuries been influenced by Sanskrit.

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Some sounds are peculiar to Kashmiri and not found in Hindi, Sanskrit, Persian or Arabic languages. It is customary to consider Kashmiri, as spoken in Srinagar, as the standard form of the language, says Kachru[21]. The attitude-denoting terms such as village Kashmiri (*gami koshur*) and city Kashmiri (*shahri koshur*) frequently mark speakers. There is also a difference in pronunciation between how a villager and a city-dweller talk. There are minor differences in vocabulary and pronunciation between Kashmiri spoken by Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. The vocabulary of the former is overlaid with Persian words, whereas the vocabulary of the latter uses Hindi or Sanskrit words[22].

Scripts

There is no uniformity in the use of scripts for the Kashmiri language. In recent years, it has been written in more than one script. The following scripts are used for Kashmiri and some of its dialects[23].

The Sharda Script: Sharda script was developed around the 10th century and is the oldest script known to Kashmiris. It is said that Hindus used this script earlier to write Sanskrit and later used it to write Kashmiri. It is now mostly used for religious purposes or horoscope writing by a small group among the Kashmiri Pandit community. The symbols of this script are different from the Devanagari symbols, and every letter of the alphabet has a name[24].

The Devanagari Script: Kashmiri Hindus used this script for writing Kashmiri literature until 1947 and it is still in use today. It was made popular by Kashmiri scholars Zinda Koul (popularly called Masterji) and S. K. Toshkhani. Kashmiri Pandits have been pleading with the government to recognize Devanagari-Kashmiri as an additional script for the Kashmiri language, but it has not happened yet.

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Persian-Arabic Script: This script cuts across religious boundaries and has been used by both Hindus and Muslims. It has also been recognized as the official script for Kashmiri by the government and is widely used. Other scripts include the Roman and Takri scripts. The former has been used for Kashmiri but did not become popular. The latter is used in the Kishtwar area for the Kishtwari language.

Food

Kashmiri Pandits are essentially rice eaters. Rice is the main cereal crop in the Valley, and wheat is harvested only in some dry plateaus. Sugarcane does not grow in the Valley; hence a Kashmiri Pandit has not developed a taste for sweet things. Before motor transport became available, the Valley inhabitants depended on locally grown, often wild vegetables. For Kashmiri Pandits *hakh* (collard greens) is the most favorite vegetable. They drink two types of tea: *Kahwa* (type of green tea) and *Sheer Chai* (salted tea with milk). The former is the most popular beverage. It is prepared without milk but with sugar and is spiced with cinnamon, saffron, crushed almonds and green cardamom. For *sheer chai*, special tea leaves are boiled to almost dryness and a pinch of bicarbonate of soda and milk are added to give it a pink color. Every time is tea time in a Kashmiri home, and a *Samovar* (a charcoal-fired kettle of Central Asian origin) is generally steaming throughout the day. It would be a sheer discourtesy to allow even an odd visitor to leave the house without serving him a hot cup of *kahwa*.

Barring a few exceptions, Brahmins in India generally are vegetarians, and other castes are generally non-vegetarians. However, most Kashmiri Pandits eat fish, lamb, and goat meat. However, chicken and eggs used to be taboo for them. It is not uncommon for some members of the same Kashmiri Pandit household to be vegetarians and others non-vegetarians. The meat-eating tradition of Kashmiri Pandits may come as a shock to non-Kashmiri Brahmins. Still, Kashmiri Pandits don't consider their meat-eating tradition contrary to their high status as Saraswat Brahmins; this is because the lives of Kashmiri

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Pandits have been strongly influenced by a Tantric way of life in which eating fish and meat is part of its sacred rituals. Another reason Kashmiri Pandits eat meat may be that the climate in the Valley is harsh during winter, and the only vegetable grown is *hakh*. People also use dried vegetables and lotus roots (*nadur*).

Dress

Kashmiri Pandit males and females had a unique traditional dress mostly used in the Valley, which has been criticized for being conducive to lazy habits. It is a long loose gown falling to the ankles and is called a *pheran*. It is made of cotton for summer and wool for winter, with another matching robe of white cotton called *poch*, which acts as a removable lining to the woolen robe. A pajama of the loose type was generally worn under the *pheran*. A *kangri* (fire-pot) was kept under the *pheran* to keep warm in winter. This ingenious little stove consists of an earthen pot about six inches in diameter covered with a basket of wick-work. Charcoal cinders of a special type are put in it to give a constant and continuous warmth. Some men still use *pherans* to cover themselves during the winter months in Kashmir. As a sign of respectability and affluence, men wore a turban (Kashmiri: *dastar* or *saafa*), made of a five-by-one-yard-long muslin cloth, plain or dyed.

The ladies also used to wear a dyed *pheran* (Fig 2), usually of cotton or fine wool, with a *poch*. The *pheran* had woven red tape on the borders and arms. The ladies' headgear, called *tarnga*, is an assemblage of a long-drawn cap with a top fixed *with zarbab* (cloth woven with gold thread). The cap has a well-starched and polished band of white cotton ribbon, about two inches wide, all around the head and a *zooj*, an oblong, about one yard by half yard-long muslin cloth, fully decorated with woven patterns, worn on top of the cap. The married ladies also put a *pooch*, a long narrow piece of twisted, well-starched cotton cloth, running from head to feet, patterned like a hooded snake, on the backside of the *tarnga*. They also tied a long narrow band of cloth (usually colored) called *longi* around their waist to hold the *pheran* tight while working

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or walking. Children also wore *pherans* with a cap. The shoes used were wooden slippers (Kashmiri: *khraw*) or grass slippers (Kashmiri: *pulhor*).

Fig 2: A Kashmiri Pandit woman wearing the traditional dress of *pheran, tarnga* and a wooden sandal

In the mid-1930s, with the efforts of the community leader Kashyap Bandu, Kashmiri Pandits adopted a common dress worn by north Indians. The only surviving traditional dresses are the headgear worn by males (*dastar)* and females (*tarnga*) at the time of their marriages.

Dowry System

Before the 1930s, the social infrastructure of the Kashmiri Pandit community was beset with many age-old social evils, such as dowry and social functions for marriages involving huge expenditures. In the 1930s, community leaders such as Jia Lal Kilam and Kashyap Bandu launched a crusade against these social

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evils. The majority of the community responded favorably by rejecting the dowry system and adopting simple wedding ceremonies.

General Traits of Kashmiri Pandits

Kashmiri Pandits have been characterized variously by travelers and authors right from early history. The Chinese traveler Hiuen-Tsang, who visited Kashmir in 631 A.D., wrote that "People are good-looking but deceitful, learned and instructed".

"Their intellectual superiority over the rest of the population must be admitted," wrote Ernest Neve in his book *Beyond the Pir Punjal.* He went on to say that "the Pandits are quick of apprehension and have good memories".

Walter Lawrence, in his book *The Valley of Kashmir,* described Kashmiri Pandits in the following words, "They are a very intelligent and intellectual race of men, of excellent manners, and often very charming and amusing companions. They are fluent and ready writers. They can undergo great strain and fatigue when the necessity arises, despite their soft, gentle appearance".

Because of being surrounded by the overwhelming beauty of nature, a special characteristic of the Kashmiri Pandits has been their harmonious outlook towards nature and society. Rather than following a few dogmas, they uphold the values of love and brotherhood of humankind. The great medieval Kashmiri sages, such as Utpala, Somananda, Abhinavagupta, Lalleshwari (*Lal Ded*), and modern sages, such as Bhagwan Gopi Nath, Swami Lakshman Joo, Swami Parmanand, Swami Nandlal, Swami Shankar Razdan and Swami Vidyadhar were drawn towards a love in which there is no' you' or 'me', but only the oneness of love. Great Hindu and Muslim mystics and mystic poets of Kashmir, such as Shri Kantha, *Lal Ded,* Noor-ud-din Wali (*Nund Rishi*), Krishna Joo Razdan, Samad Mir, Mahjoor and Ahad Zargar taught love for people, nature and mysticism.

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Thus, in Kashmiri tradition, we find a blending of many faiths, such as Buddhism, Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Sufism, that led the people to be generally tolerant and free from communal conflict. This scenario, however, completely changed in the 1990s, when Islamic terrorists forced the entire Kashmiri Pandit community out of Kashmir to fulfill their goal of Islamizing the Valley.

Kashmiri Pandits possess the knack of quickly adapting themselves to the changed circumstances. During the Pathan rule, a Pandit wore a girdle around his waist and studied Persian; during the Sikh rule, he wore a long flowing beard, and during the Dogra rule, he wore long mustaches to adapt to the political realities of the time. His tenacity, adaptability and elasticity helped him endure six centuries of the most ruthless, brutal, and savage medieval Muslim rule in Kashmir.

An old proverb says, "*Batah chhu gratah*", meaning "The Pandit is a mill", i.e., Pandit is industrious. Kashmiri Pandits are known to be gifted and hardworking. They have a sense of art and beauty and love song and music. Kashmiri Pandits are peace-loving, friendly, diligent and competitive. They do not like following a leader because everyone is seemingly a leader. They develop good relations with neighbors wherever they settle. Their aesthetic sense is highly developed. They are fond of beautiful things. Their annual calendar is packed with auspicious days, family birthdays and birthdays of their saints and sages, festivals, fasting and feasting days and other elaborate religious ceremonies.

Kashmiri Pandits exhibit love for the animal world. Traditionally, in Kashmir, a Pandit did not take his meals before leaving a small portion outside his plate (Kashmiri: *hooni maet*) to feed the birds and dogs after finishing his meals. Although a vast majority are meat-eaters, the Pandits, as a rule, do not themselves slaughter any animals.

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Kashmiri Pandits have followed the centuries-old hierarchical joint-family system with close family ties. In this system, the head of the family is the eldest living male or female whose guidance and blessings are sought in all matters of social and religious importance. The joint-family system among Kashmiri Pandits is now disintegrating fast due to their recent exodus from the Valley and other factors such as modern education, urbanization, and the impact of Western culture.

Education has been the greatest strength of the Kashmiri Pandit community. Even in the most difficult times, their goal was to get their children the best of education. They were the pioneers of modem education in Kashmir and founded many educational institutions, including the first-ever girls' school in Srinagar. On the negative side, self-preservation seems to be the primary goal of a Pandit family with no concern for the community at large. This may have been because of the adverse conditions that they had to live through for the past six centuries when individual survival was of utmost importance.

Kashmiris have loved nicknames and cultivated this art for generations. They coined nicknames making full use of ordinary events, actions, habits, and even physical features of persons. Many of these nicknames are obnoxious and absurd. For example, *Thalchoor,* a Kashmiri surname, means "plate thief". A Pandit may have been either caught red-handed while stealing a *thal* (plate) or was accused of such a theft. He and his descendants were given the nickname *Thalchoor,* which in time, became their family name. Most of the Kashmiri nicknames were coined after the names of animals, insects, trades, occupations, and places. For example, the nickname *Gagroo* means rat, *Daand* means bull, *Bror* means cat, and *Peush* means flea.

According to Anand Koul, there lived a Kashmiri Pandit named Vasdev. He had a mulberry (*Tul*) tree in his courtyard and was, therefore, called Vasudev *Tul.* To get rid of this nickname, he cut down the mulberry tree, but a stump (*Mund*) remained, and he was called Vasudev *Mund.* Irritated and annoyed, Vasudev immediately removed the stump, which left a depression (*khud*), and

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henceforth he was known as Vasadev *Khud*. Continuing his battle against the nickname, he filled up the depression, and the ground became a mound (*Teng*). Now he was re-nicknamed 'Vasadev *Teng*'. Exasperated, he gave up removing the cause of his nickname, and it continued to be *Teng*, which became the family name of his progeny[25].

Kashmiris never forget a nickname once coined for a particular person, even if the person makes all amends in his behavior, which had served as the source of his nickname. A certain gentleman named Karim was once found walking barefoot in the street. He was instantly called Karim *Nanvor* (i.e., Karim the barefooted). He is reported to have put on very attractive and fashionable shoes later on, but people would whisper, "Look! Look! How beautiful shoes has Karim *Nanvor* put on!"

Kashmiris have also been very good at creating couplets in Kashmiri reflecting ordinary events, actions, behaviors, and even physical features of persons. An example of a couplet created to denounce a bad deed: *badh oos Hara-Kak raad Karin kaar, Janki heath karukh Pero-par*, meaning someone named Harakak performed such bad deeds that he together with his wife Janki was expelled across the Pir Panjal mountains. Another example is *Yohai gav Mohi Din Kaara lolo, Ramakak on-nyee aara lolo*, meaning this man named Mohi Din Kaara drove another man Ram Chand Kak crazy.

An appalling trait of some Kashmiris was to look down upon disabled people. They didn't even spare such persons from nicknames. A man named Dwarika Nath, who was blind (*oon* in Kashmiri), was called *Daar oon*. Another man named Jagar Nath, who had a limp (*lung* in Kashmiri), was called *Jaga Lung*.

Kashmir's Contribution to India's Cultural Heritage

Because of its enchanting beauty and calm climate, the Kashmir Valley has always provided an amicable environment for saints and scholars to ponder the mysteries of life and strive for intellectual and spiritual pursuits. As a result,

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during their five thousand years of history, Kashmiri Pandits have excelled in sciences, language, aesthetics, religion, philosophy, music, and dance, thus making an enormous contribution to the cultural heritage of India. Due to the limited scope of this publication, the following discussion presents only an overview of the contributions made by Kashmiris in various fields of learning.

Architecture and Planning

The ruins of the ancient temples of Kashmir, such as Martand, the enormous stupa and chaitya in Parihasapura, and the Pandrethan and Avantipur temple complexes are a few examples of the excellence of ancient Kashmiri architecture and art. The Parihasapura monuments became models for Buddhist architecture from Afghanistan to Japan.

The paintings used to decorate the ancient temple walls show that Kashmiris must have been well-versed in the art of painting. The earliest surviving examples of these paintings come from Gilgit and date from about the 8th century A.D. One of the best sites to see the ancient Kashmiri painting style is in the five temples comprising the dharma-mandala at Alchi in Ladakh, which escaped destruction that other temples suffered at the hands of a Ladakhi king who embraced Islam. The earliest of these buildings is the Du-Khang, where one can see astonishingly well-preserved *mandalas* that document the Kashmiri Buddhist pantheon as well as the Buddhist representation of the Hindu pantheon[26].

Kashmiri artisans were long famed for their many works of art, which were later transmitted to Central Asia in Buddhist artwork. The historian of art Susan Huntington writes that Kashmir served as imagery and influence for Buddhist art's northern and eastern movements. The Yunkang caves in China, the wall paintings from several sites in Inner Asia, especially Qizil and Tun-Huang, the paintings from the cache at Tun-Huang, and some iconographic manuscripts from Japan, for example, should be evaluated with Kashmir in mind as a possible source. A full understanding of the transmission of Buddhist

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art through Asia is dependent on developing a greater knowledge of Kashmiri art[27].

Ayurveda

The abundance of forests in Kashmir producing various herbs must have provided Kashmiris with a better opportunity to study their curative properties. *Charaka Samhita* is the first document on the science of herbs and was written by Charaka, a Kashmiri Pandit, who was the court poet of King Kanishka (127-151A.D.). *Charaka Samhita* was later revised and improved by Dridhabala, another Kashmiri Hindu, who was born in the village of Pantsinor at the confluence of Rivers Jhelum and Sindh. Dridhabala added seventeen chapters to the sixth section and the entire eighth section to *Charaka Samhita*[28].

Cosmology and Science

Another masterpiece from Kashmir, which has greatly influenced Indian thought, is the *Yoga Vashishtha*. It is a book on philosophy (some call it a philosophical novel), which describes the instruction given by an ancient sage, Vashishtha, to Rama of Ramayana. *Yoga Vashishtha* is over 29,000 verses long and is traditionally attributed to Valmiki, author of the epic Ramayana, over two thousand years old. But scholars believe it was composed in the early centuries in Kashmir. Professing to be a book of instruction on the nature of consciousness, it has many fascinating passages on time, space, matter and cognition. These passages are significant in telling us about thinking in Kashmir; they summarize Indian ideas of physics available to us through various sources that are not widely known outside scholarly circles. Starting with a position that seeks to unify space, time, matter and consciousness, an argument is made for the relativity of space and time, cyclic and recursively defined universes, and a non-anthropocentric view[29]. Another important contribution from Kashmir is *Pingala Shastra* (the science of metrics), authored by Pingala, who was a Kashmiri[30].

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Dance, Drama, and Music

Bharata Muni's *Natya Shastra* presents the language of creative expression and is the world's first book on stagecraft. It is believed that Bharat Muni developed *Natya Shastra* in Kashmir. The indirect reasons for this identification are that many scholars in Kashmir discussed the *rasa* idea of the *Natya Shastra*. Another reason is that *Natya Shastra* has 36 chapters. It is suggested that 'number 36' may have been deliberately chosen to conform to the theory of 36 tattvas, which is a part of Kashmir Shaivism. Many descriptions in this book seem especially true for Kashmir. The *bhana*, a one-actor play described by Bharata, is still performed in Kashmir by groups called '*bhand pather*' (*bhana patra* in Sanskrit)[31].

A Kashmiri by the name of Sarangdev (whose father immigrated from Kashmir to southern India in the 12th century) wrote the most important work on Karnataka music (*Sangit Ratnakara*), which formulates the basis of Karnataka music[32]. From the accounts of Kalhana in *Rajatarangini,* we learn that temple dances prevailed in Kashmir when the temple paintings were made (c. 10th century A.D.). Kalhana mentions many kings who encouraged music and dance. The only extant complete commentary on the *Natya Shastra* is written by Abhinavagupta. The massive thirteenth-century text *Sangitaratnakara* (Ocean of Music and Dance), composed by the Kashmiri theorist Sharngadeva, is one of the most important landmarks in Indian music history. It was composed in south-central India shortly before the conquest of this region by Muslims and thus gives an account of Indian music before the full impact of Muslim influence. A large part of this work is devoted to *marga*, that is, the ancient music that includes the system of *jatis* and *grama-ragas*[33].

History

Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* (literally 'River of Kings'), the greatest historical *Kavya* (poetry) in Sanskrit, is an important contribution to history as it describes the events in Kashmiri history with remarkable accuracy and faithfulness. "So-

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called historical works in India", writes Safaya, "can never be compared with this work *(Rajatarangini)*. Later historians Jonaraja, Srivara, and Suka updated Kalhan's *Rajatarangini* to include the events after 1149 AD to the time when the Mughal emperor Akbar annexed Kashmir. Puranas are more mythological than historical. Bana's *Harshacharita* is more a novel than history. *Kumarapala-carits* of Hemachandra (1088-1172 AD) is more about grammar than history. All other historical works are written by 'Kashmirians' [people of Kashmir]. Kashmir thus occupies a unique position in the historical literature of India"[34].

Somapala-Vilasa, written by Jalahana (a member of the court of king Alankara of Kashmir), provides an account of King Somapala, king of Rajapuri (current Rajouri), conquered by king Sussala (1112-1120 AD). *Rajendra Karnapura* was written by Sambhu and provided detailed information about King Harsha (11th century). Modern famous historians, among others, include A. Kaul, Gwash Lal, P.N. Kaul (who wrote *Tasvir-e-Kashmir*), and J.N. Ganhar, who wrote *Buddhism in Kashmir & Ladakh.*

Leadership

In terms of their population, Kashmiri Pandits are less than five-hundredths of one percent (.05%) of the population of India. Yet this tiny community has given India two prime ministers, two cabinet ministers, one chief justice of India, two general secretaries of Parliament, one chief election commissioner and four generals! Again, proportionately, the Kashmiri Pandit community has produced high-ranking officers, diplomats, doctors, engineers, scientists, actors, entrepreneurs, judges, school teachers and university professors more than any other community in India[35].

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Literature

Some scholars believe that Panini, the father of Sanskrit grammar, was born in the village of Salatoor in Kashmir. For this reason, he was also called Salatoori[36].
Later, he moved to Patliputra (modem Patna) in Bihar, where he taught Sanskrit grammar.

Sage Patanjali, the compiler of *Yoga Darshana* (a treatise on philosophy), was a Kashmiri. There was some controversy over his birthplace, but it is now confirmed that he was born in Kashmir[37]. Patanjali was educated in Takshashila (c. 800 BCE, a famous university in northwest Punjab), and he taught in Patliputra. He wrote *Mahabhashya* (commentary) on Panini's grammar, which, according to Subhash Kak, remains one of the greatest achievements of human intellect[38]. It describes the grammar of the Sanskrit language by a system of 4,000 algebraic rules, a feat that has not been equaled for any other language. It also set the tone for scientific studies in India, emphasizing algorithmic explanations. Patanjali's commentary on the Panini grammar was responsible for the exaltation of its reputation. It appears that Panini arose in the same intellectual climate that characterized Kashmir during its classical period, writes Subash Kak[39].

Kashmiri grammarians, Jayaditya and Vamana wrote *Kasika-Vritti*, a famous commentary on Panini's grammar. Another Kashmir grammarian, Kaiyata, wrote *Mahabhashya-pradipa*, a running commentary on Patanjali's *Mahabhashya*. A Kashmiri scholar by the name of Chandragemin founded the Chandra School of Grammar, which flourished in the reign of King Abhimanyu (400 AD) in Kashmir. Kashmiri scholars developed the following schools of poetics, which are unparalleled in the history of world literature: *Rasa Alankara*, *Riti*, *Dhvani*, and *Vakrokti*. Kashmiris developed their script known as Sharda Script, which like other Indian and Southeast Asian scripts, is derived from Brahmi, which was in use in India at least as early as 500 BC. New theories suggest that Brahmi, in turn, evolved from the ancient Indus (or Sarasvati) script that was in use in India in 2500 BC[40].

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Most of India's major poets and scholars of Sanskrit literature were Kashmiris, including Kalidas, Kshirswamin, Kalhana, Bilhana, Mammat, Anand Vardhan Vaman, Kshemendra, Abhinavagupta, and Rojanak Shitianth, amongst others. Kshemendra (c. 1100 AD), a pupil of Abhinavagupta, is called the Veda Vyasa of Kashmir. He condensed the three great epics—the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata,* and *Brihatkatha* into three poetical works '*Ramayana Manjari*', '*Bharatha Manjari*' and '*Brhath Katha Manjari*'. He also composed many small works on various other topics.

After the ancient universities of Takshila and Nalanda, the center of Sanskrit studies shifted to the Sanskrit school at Bijbehara in Kashmir. This, together with its huge library, was destroyed during the reign of Sikandar, the *butshikan* (iconoclast).

Sanskrit

In ancient times Kashmir was the popular center of Sanskrit learning, and scholars from various parts of India came to study the *shastras* (scriptures) from learned teachers. Kashmiris took their Sanskrit culture to distant lands as missionaries. They also became interpreters of the Indian civilization, and they authored many fundamental synthesizing and expository works. "For upward of two thousand years", writes George Grierson, "Kashmir has been the home of Sanskrit learning and from this small Valley has issued masterpieces of history, poetry, romance, fable, and philosophy. Kashmiris are proud, and justly proud, of the literary glories of their land. For centuries it (Kashmir) was the home of the greatest Sanskrit scholars..."[41] According to Bilhana, "Even women in Kashmir spoke Sanskrit and Prakrit quite fluently"[42]. Following are some eminent Kashmiri Sanskrit scholars: Mankha is the author of the Sanskrit dictionary titled *Anekārthakośa*. Somadeva was a famous fiction writer. Bilhana was the court poet of the Chalukya King Parmadi Vikramaditya. Dribhabhatta and Udbhatta wrote on medicine. Kalhana is the author of famous historical literature.

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Chapter 10

WILL PANDITS SURVIVE WITHOUT THEIR KASHMIR?

Vijay K. Sazawal

Introduction

"Kashmiri Pandits are one of the most successful Indian-American communities"

–Raja Krishnamurthy, U.S. Congressman, Washington DC, December 7, 2021

"You have remarked on exports from Kashmir, but you have not mentioned the most valuable of their exports, namely Kashmiri Pandits like Nehrus, Saprus, Katjus, Kunzrs, Kauls, etc".

– Sir Louis Dane, Retired Lieutenant-Governor of British Punjab, at a meeting of the East-India association in London, March 1939

"The future will see Kashmiri Pandits, seen as cultural elites of North India, even more divided. This division will not be between those who are committed to the past and those who are not, but between those who fervently embrace a particular religious identity and those who are indifferent to it".

– Henny Sender, Author of the book based on her dissertation, "The Kashmiri Pandits", 1988

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The story of Shaivite Hindus of Kashmir, also known as Kashmiri Pandits, is a story of an ethnic race, a community that has always been in transition. It has been so not just within the past few centuries but over many millennia that have gone by. Once a powerhouse that produced bold military generals, powerful emperors and highly competent administrators, the community in the last 800 years has been grappling with its scattered existence through dexterity, perseverance, optimism, and at times with, desperation. One can recall the horrors of the recent genocide and ethnic cleansing that has rendered the community displaced and homeless since the 1990s, but it is neither their first such misfortune nor perhaps their last. However, Kashmiri Shaivite Hindus have shown time and again their capacity for revival, resurgence, and renewal. These are the children of Shiva and Parvati—and they will endure.

For most of the discourse that follows, I will call the "Shaivite Hindus" of Kashmir, who were mostly Brahmins but also *Kayasths* (who have distinguished themselves in administrative and military services since antiquity), as "Kashmiri Pandits". (How these Hindus came to be called Pandits has already been addressed in an earlier section).

To answer the question, "Can Pandits survive without their Kashmir?" one has to take a holistic view of who Pandits are and what they have gone through in good times and bad. So, I will march through the pages of history but with a different perspective, one in which we will constantly be examining how Kashmiri Pandits came to be who they are today and what makes their identity so unique and compelling to withstand the odds of survival when other cultures and ethnicities in similarly dire situations have mostly perished.

I will examine this topic from a wider canvas, meaning that I will not limit myself to events of the *immediate past* but of the *entire past*. Going a step further, the answer does not lie in emphasizing the dark period of history that began after the 14th Century CE, but rather highlighting the era when

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Kashmiri Pandits built up their innate strengths, character and outlook, passing their virtues and their values from one generation to the next.

Evolution of the Kashmiri Pandit Identity–a Historical Perspective

The purpose of this chapter is not to recount the full history of Kashmir or Kashmiri Pandits, but to trace the origins of their character, their outlook on life and times, and their intrinsic strengths that have shaped their life and destiny over the years. Most people perceive ancient Kashmir as an isolated Valley or region surrounded by formidable mountains giving its people an identity of their own. This, I believe, is the revisionist view of Kashmir championed mostly by those who begin their historical perspective from the folklore of Rishi Kashyap and the creation of the Valley; and then quickly gloss over ancient Kashmir's history until the last ruling Hindu dynasties from the 10th century.

What is missing in such a narrative is Kashmir's brilliant past which is culturally linked to the Indian subcontinent in the south and politically to surrounding regions, especially Central Asia, Persia and Afghanistan. While references to Rishi Kashyap go as far as the *Rig Veda* (there is a school of thought that Rishi Kashyap may have even contributed a few verses to the ancient oral discourse) thereby asserting Kashmir's identity as integral to India's culture and ethos, it is the *Nilamata Puran*, written in Sanskrit, that links Kashmir-Hindu religion and its kings with the *Mahabharat*, reaffirming Kashmir's active political and social connections with the rest of India. Kashmir's religious identity with India, be it Vedic, Hindu or Buddhist during the ancient times, is further elaborated in the *Rajatarangini*, a dissertation in Sanskrit written nearly a millennium back by Kalhana, who interestingly dated *Mahabharat* War to 2449 BCE. Then there was the Taxila University, founded by Bharat, in the ancient city of Takshashila, just 200 miles southwest of where another important center of learning would develop about two millennia later in Kashmir. The point being made here is that Kashmiri culture did not evolve in isolation but in tandem with the cultural ethos of India. Kashmiris,

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however, evolved with a strong mixture of Vedic and Tantric beliefs (i.e., spirituality and mysticism) from the land of the *Nagas,* calling themselves Shaivites and recognizing Shiva's supremacy within the sacred Hindu Trinity, though there were periods in history when both *Bhagwan* Shiv and *Bhagwan* Vishnu were considered tutelary deities of the Valley.

Politically, ancient Kashmir was a regional powerhouse. The continuity of rajas and kingdoms from 3400 BCE (5,500 years back) affirms the military prowess and financial strength of these kingdoms until the waning years of Hindu rule in the early 14th Century. Vedic Sanskrit, a language that shares its roots with other ancient Greek and Persian ("Indo-European") languages, was prevalent in North India, including Kashmir, from about 1500 BCE (3,600 years back), first as an oral language and subsequently in the written form using *Devanagari* (meaning the "script of the gods").

As centuries rolled by, the Kingdom of which Kashmir was a part grew in size, wealth, strength and population. It attracted explorers, adventurers and seers from the rest of India as well as from the neighboring regions of Gandhar (Eastern Afghanistan) in the west, Bactria (Central Asia) in the north-west and Tibet and China in the east. Following the death of Buddha in 483 BCE, Buddhist monks travelled to Kashmir and Gandhar to spread their faith.

When the Maurya empire grew from its origins in Patliputra to the Gangetic Plains of North India and onwards to the North-West to exploit the regional instabilities brought about by the departure (and eventually death) of the Greek invader Alexander in 323 BCE, Kashmir got caught up in the successful military campaign launched by the powerful Maurya King, Chandragupta Maurya. The Maurya dynasty ruled over most of the Indian Subcontinent from 321 BCE to 185 BCE, and the most famous king of the dynasty was Chandragupta's grandson, Ashoka, who ruled from 273 to 232 BCE. Emperor Ashoka is generally credited with founding the city of Srinagar (then called Girinagri), and it was in his time, after his conversion to Buddhism, that about 5,000 Buddhists were sent to the regions to spread the new faith beyond

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Kashmir. Buddhism flowered both in Gandhar and Kashmir. Kashmir was in those days, ruled by King Pratapaditya, a relative of Maurya Emperor Bindusara (Emperor Ashoka's father), who took over the reign in 297 BCE. The Kushan Empire, reflecting a cultural cocktail of Chinese, Asia Minor, Persian and Greek cultures, dominated the region from 30 CE to 375 CE, and was the main guardian and proselytizer of Buddhism. In fact, during the very first year reign of the most famous of Kushan rulers, Emperor Kanishka, the 4th Buddhist Council was held in Yarwan, Shopian, Kashmir, in 78 CE. But Hinduism made its way back as the religion of choice in the Valley by the time the Gupta Empire brought most of the old Mauryan empire in its fold during 4th Century CE to late 6th Century CE, when not only Hinduism but also Buddhism flourished in peace and harmony at a time that is often called the "Golden Age of India".

The nuances from the external cultural influences were reflected in Kashmir with the emergence of the Karkota dynasty in the 7th Century CE, following the 590-year reign of the Gonanda dynasty. The founder of the Karkota dynasty, Durlabvardhana, lived in the era of Emperor Harshvardhan (Harsha). Emperor Harsha was a powerful emperor of India, ruling over vast swaths of land from Nepal to Kashmir. The lands that Durlabvardhana inherited from the Gonanda dynasty comprised not only the Valley but portions of present-day Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Afghanistan. The culture in the vast kingdom was a blending of Hindu, Buddhist and Zoroastrian religions. Many languages and writing scripts were in vogue, with Sanskrit as the prominent language of choice.

The Karkota dynasty gave a new cultural identity to the aboriginal Kashmiri people that continues till today. Buddhism had fallen out of favor by then, and Durlabvardhana promoted scholarship in Hindu culture, reinvigorating the Vedic Hinduism that was practised in the Valley. *Nilamata Purana* was commissioned by the King to describe the way of life and the practice of the Vedic Hindu religion during his rule that lasted for nearly 36 years, providing an extraordinary record for the future. A Chinese scholar, Hiuen Tsang, who

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visited the Kingdom during his travels to India during 627- 645 CE, was impressed by the culture and economic prosperity of the kingdom. Kalhana provides further details of the majestic rule of the Karkota dynasty in The *Rajatarangini*, written in the 12th Century CE. Whereas *Nilamata Purana* is a treatise on the ancient culture of Kashmir, *Rajatarangini* is a treatise on the ancient political history of Kashmir.

If Durlabvardhana opened a new chapter in the history of Kashmir by strengthening its Vedic Hindu identity, his son, Durlabhaka, invoking his Mauryan heritage by taking the name of Pratapaditya, fought campaigns to annex additional lands to the kingdom. But he also did something exceptional. He planned a new center of learning, calling it *Sharda Peeth*, on the banks of river Kishanganga (now called Neelam). *Sharda Peeth* was a temple university which played a key role in the development and popularization of the *Sharda* script in North India from the 8th Century CE to the 12th Century CE. The *Sharda* script owes its ancestry to the Brahmi script, which is also the mother of Sanskrit. Some believe the *Sharda* script was actually created during the period of his youngest son (name to follow in the next paragraph), because the earliest known *Sharda* script tablet was discovered in a village, then named Udabhandapura and now called Hund, which is situated on the banks of the Indus River, not far from Peshawar. The archaeological artifact has been dated to the second half of the 8th Century CE.

The name that is indelible in the history of Kashmir is that of the third or youngest son of Durlabvardhana (the elder two sons ending their respective reigns in quick succession due to deaths from unnatural causes conspired by Tantric court priests). The youngest son's name was Lalitaditya who ruled in the mid-8th Century CE. Lalitaditya was a very successful warrior who expanded his empire in all directions covering portions of North India, Afghanistan and Central Asia. The capital of his kingdom was Parihaspur ("City of Laughter") near Pattan in Kashmir. He went on to defeat the King of Kannauj and remained undefeated during his reign. A century later, the famous Iranian scholar and traveler, Al Biruni, would write that "Kashmiris

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celebrated an annual festival in commemoration of King Lalitaditya, who defeated the Turks and ruled over the world".

The enduring legacy of King Lalitaditya is reflected in the majestic grandeur of the Sun Temple (*Martand* in Sanskrit) that he built in the 8th Century CE in Mattan (near Anantnag) dedicated to the Hindu God Surya. The temple was surrounded by a large landscaped pool of water fed by natural springs and included 84 smaller shrines, all walled by a collonaded courtyard that stretched 220 feet long and 142 feet wide. Even today, seeing the ruins of this mighty temple, one is awestruck by its size and beauty. Many of the artifacts recovered from that period show images of Goddesses Durga and Saraswati in various manifestations.

Besides strengthening the Hindu character in the local culture of Kashmir, the Karkota dynasty of which King Lalitaditya was the shining star, also introduced Kashmiris to new cultures and new languages from annexed lands, creating a syncretic confluence of new ideas and public attitudes. The idea of *plurality* and a natural tolerance towards new cultures took root in the Kashmiri psyche, which would play a defining role in their social development and tolerant attitudes, but also become their bane a few hundred years later.

The Karkota dynasty was followed by the Utpala dynasty, founded by King Avantivarman in the 9th Century CE. A patron of arts, he founded many new cities in the Kashmir Valley, building magnificent temples in and around such cities dedicated to either *Bhagwan* Shiv or *Bhagwan* Vishnu. During this period, there was a rejuvenation of the Hindu faith through immersion in Hindu philosophy and Hindu rituals, which were performed in numerous temples and shrines that became part and parcel of the daily life of Kashmiris.

A great Vedic philosopher and orator named Adi Shankaracharya, who hailed from present-day Kerala, travelled across India, rejuvenating Hinduism by reintroducing Hindu scriptures like *Upanishads* to the masses. His pilgrimage took him to Kashmir in the first quarter of the 9th Century CE when

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Hinduism was in resurgence all across India, including Kashmir. Today a Shiv temple in Kashmir, located at the highest point in Srinagar, bears his name.

The dexterity of the Kashmiri Pandit mind in absorbing new cultures and languages—an amalgam of traditional Hinduism, Tantric and Vedic philosophies in either Sanskrit, Kashmiri, Kashmiri-related Dardi or even Zoroastrian languages—is personified by the great sage and philosopher Abinavgupta, who lived towards the end of the 10th Century CE. Credited as the father of Kashmir Shaivism, he was a polymathic personality who produced many treatises on Shaivism and exercised strong influence not only in Kashmir but in the broader Indian culture as well.

Subsequently, there were many palace intrigues that brought forth a number of Hindu Kings that ruled Kashmir for brief periods at a time. But ever since the Arab chieftain, Mohammad bin Qasim invaded Multan and Sindh around 712 CE, the wealth of India—its temples laden with gold, its natural resources, its thriving commercial markets, and its peace-loving people—became fair game for outsiders, especially Muslim rulers from Arab and Persian lands. India would never be the same. And sooner or later, Kashmir was bound to be adversely affected as well.

It began when Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni (a city located close to Kabul in Afghanistan) started the pillage of India from around 1000 CE. He raided India 17 times over the next 25 years, looting and destroying Hindu temples (including the famous Somnath Temple of Gujarat) and plundering India's wealth. He was after India's riches, and that meant bounties in Kashmir as well. He brought along a Persian scholar, named Al Biruni, with him to record his victories. It is through Al Biruni's travelogue that we find that he attacked Kashmir in 1014 and 1021 CE but was repulsed by the Kashmiri Brahmin King of the time, Sangramraja of the Lohara dynasty.

However, the end of Hindu rule in Kashmir also came during the reign of the Lohara dynasty, creating a paradigm shift that would result in a substantial

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depopulation of the Valley. Mongol attacks on Kashmir began in 1235 CE during the reign of Ogedei Khan (Genghis Khan's third son and successor) and ended when a Mongol general Zulqadr Khan (also known as Dulcha), entered the Valley in 1320 CE (during the reign of King Suhadeva). What followed was mass killing, obliterating temples, homes and granaries, and taking away thousands of men, women and children as slaves, who all (including the Mongol army) perished in the snows of Hindu Kush Mountain on their journey back to Mongolia.

It is important to briefly highlight the ancient history of Kashmir to demonstrate with ample record and proof that Kashmiri Pandit's heritage comes from a culturally vibrant, physically hardy, militarily strong, ethically tolerant, and educationally accomplished people. They travelled far and wide from home to govern remote areas and were at ease among a medley of cultures and languages, even as these were different from their own. These attributes, as we will discuss later, became their inherent and innate strengths that would allow them to survive even as grave calamities far beyond their comprehension hit them four centuries later.

What caused the reversal of fortunes for Kashmiri Pandits in the 14th Century? The Mongol incursions not only took a deadly toll on the local population but also brought despair among the public. When the last Hindu King fled from the palace, it created a power vacuum that was filled by opportunists of all shades and faiths. It is not my intention to mention the chronological details of that period which led to the establishment of Islamic rule in Kashmir. That by itself would not have completely and drastically changed the sociological and psychological fabric of the society as long as the majority of inhabitants would not have converted to Islam. In a larger context, how did a small band of invading zealots of a martial faith succeed in ruling over hardy Kashmiris and converting most of them to Islam all in a matter of one or two decades? While the reasons are complex, one thing that strikes out as being the most significant is what was happening in Kashmir's neighborhood around that very time.

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An Islamic empire of Turkic-Afghan origins based in Delhi, called the Delhi Sultanate, stretched over large parts of the subcontinent in the 14th Century CE. Even as Kashmiri Pandits continued with their way of life unheeded in their beautiful Valley, things were changing in Punjab, only a few hundred miles to the south. In 1173 CE, a Persian-Turkic-origin Muslim warlord named Mohammad Ghori (along with his brother) took over Ghazni and began waging a military campaign to annex India, initially using similar strategies that Mahmud Ghazni had pursued some 150 years earlier. Even though Ghori was defeated in many initial campaigns, his persistent and repeated attacks eventually led him to victories, laying the foundation of Islamic rule in vast portions of North India by 1194 CE. The Delhi Sultanate began with the Mamluk dynasty in 1206 CE and lasted for 320 years when the Mughals took over.

Over a century after the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, the Shahmiri Dynasty began its rule in Kashmir by Sultan Shah Mir in 1339 CE. Islam began to expand its presence in Kashmir as a "soft power", much like how proselytization happens even in modern times, through noble acts of charity, social welfare, cultural interactions and scholarly pursuits. Keeping in tune with Kashmir's history of extending generous hospitality towards new cultures and philosophies, various Muslim Sufis started showing up from foreign lands. It began with the arrival of Bulbul Shah from Turkistan in the early 14th Century CE, who is credited with converting the first local person to Islam. He was followed by a Persian Sufi scholar Mir Sayed Ali from Hamdan in Iran and remembered as Shah-e-Hamdan, who managed to secure a position in the Court of Shah Mir. So did many other Muslim visitors from Iran and Arabia. Also, in his period, a local Kashmiri Brahmin lady named Lalleshwari (*Lal Ded*) from Baramulla roamed in the Valley as a mystic, spreading the message of Shaivism through poetry. Blending the mystic poetry of *Lal Ded* with Islamic Sufism was taken up by a Kulgam-born Muslim convert named Sheikh Noor-u-Din, popularly known as *Nund Rishi*. By blurring the differences between the existing Hindu faith and the new Muslim faith, *Nund Rishi* promoted the gradual proselytization of Kashmiri Hindus to Islam, which

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steadily began to gain traction under the Muslim rule, be it for securing material gains from the Royal Court, or improving personal safety and security, or due to the peer pressure, or perhaps due to curiosity in exploring a new religious order. However, the Sanskrit language continued to be used by the people during that period even as invaders brought new languages with them.

All this would change when Sultan Sikandar, the 6th Sultan of the Shahmiri dynasty, took the throne in 1389 CE. His father, Sultan Qutub-ud-din or Himda (also called "Hinduka"), was so frustrated with Hindu subjects determined to stick to their ancient Shaivite traditions and unwilling to convert even after persistent and aggressive persuasion that he took a "leave of absence" during his reign for two years by staying away in Turkestan.

Sultan Sikandar "*Bhutshikan*" (Iconoclast) took over the reign after the death of his father, with his mother serving as the Regent until he matured to an adult age. Recognizing the frustrations of his father in not being able to convert the masses to Islam by preaching its merits and through non-intimidating persuasion, he decided to wield the sword and force submission to Islam by brutal and violent means. In this bloody holocaust of Kashmiri Hindus, he was guided by two very important personalities. One was Mir Muhammad Hamdani, the son of Shah-e-Hamdan, who arrived in Kashmir in 1393 CE and advised the Sultan that in order to break the Hindu's will to resist, the Sultan must destroy their religious icons, their temples, their libraries and their way of life. Those who continued to resist were put to death, mostly by beheadings, and mutilated bodies were left in public as a warning of the wrath awaiting those who had not converted yet. If this seemed like a living hell to the Hindu natives of Kashmir at that time, they would be seeing even worse conditions just a few years later.

Hundreds of miles away, in the Delhi Sultanate, where Mohamud Shah Tughlaq ruled in 1398 CE, the kingdom continued oppressing its Hindu subjects mercilessly and converting people to the Muslim faith in large numbers. Yet few would realize that a new military force would soon appear on

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its borders, accusing the Sultanate of showing excessive tolerance towards their Hindu subjects and using that assertion as a pretext to invade India.

The new conqueror was the founder of the Timurid Islamic Empire in Persia and Central Asia, named Timur of Turco-Mongol ancestry. He had heard of the riches of India, but since his generals were hesitant to attack a fellow Islamic kingdom, he called a meeting of his generals and princes and provided them with an explanation:

> *"The whole country of India is full of gold and jewels, and in it there are seventeen mines of gold and silver, diamonds and rubies, emeralds and tin, iron and steel, copper and quicksilver, and many metals more; and among the plants which grow there are those fit for making wearing-apparel, and aromatic shrubs, and the sugar-cane; and it is a country which is always green and verdant, and the whole aspect of the land is pleasant and delightful. Now, since the inhabitants are chiefly polytheists and infidels and idolaters and worshippers of the sun, it is incumbent on us, according to the mandate of God and of His Prophet, for us to conquer them".*

If that was not enough, Timur's son, Shahrukh Mirza, also made a statement, reminding the officers that:

> *"India is an extensive country. Whichever Sultan conquers it becomes supreme over the four corners of the globe. If under the conduct of our Amir, we conquer India, we shall become rulers over the seven climes".*

The die was cast. On 24th September 1398 CE, Timur crossed the Indus River and engaged the army of the Mohamud Shah Tughlaq on 17th December 1398 CE at Panipat. The invading army won the battle, and the entire Tughlaq army was killed, including any survivors from the battle itself. Entering Delhi, Timur saw the riches of its gold-laden temples, its magnificent buildings, and its busy commercial markets. He looted them all and laid to waste everything he saw, especially reserving his wrath for killing the idol worshippers in huge

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numbers. Most kingdoms in and around Delhi contributed to a massive tribute to buy off the interloper and get rid of him, which they did. Timur's chronicles, *Malfuzat-i-Timuri*, even describe the tribute that was sought from Sultan Sikandar of Kashmir. That tribute from Sikandar came at the expense of Kashmiri Pandits. By April 1399 CE, Timur was back in his own capital in Samarkand and gloating over the riches—gold, jewels, war elephants, slaves, etc. that he had carried away from India. The sheer size of the horror, brutality and violence unleashed by Timur traumatized the Hindus of India so deeply that they accepted their place in the society as second-class citizens under alien Muslim rulers, even though their numerical strength was vastly superior. Delhi would not recover from that carnage for another 100 years. And in Kashmir, the "Timur legacy" led to a resurgence in killings of Hindus and the destruction of their temples and properties to the point that within a few decades after Timur's pillage of India, Kashmiri Pandits were reduced to a miniscule minority living as second-class subjects, paying *Jizya*, and trying to survive under the harshest conditions. The Kashmiri Pandit folklore reminds us about the survival of only 11 Pandit clans from the holocaust, who kept their faith, rituals, and customs alive following that dark period.

Whatever Kashmiri Pandits are today is because of their unique history that took these people from the zenith of their majestic way of living at one time to the very bottom of a hellish life among the barbarians at the other, when the only thing that mattered was subsistence and survival. At that low point in their history, what separated them from other cultures that have long vanished when subjected to similar calamities was their uncanny ability, both individually and collectively, to resist falling into depravity. Instead, like the Greek mythological story of Phoenix rising from the ashes, Kashmiri Pandits also rose to new heights eventually.

Kashmiri Pandit Identity

So how do I define the Kashmiri Pandit identity in trying to assess whether it will survive or not? Let us begin with a clarification that Kashmiri Hindus were

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not called Pandits until around 1725 CE, when a "street smart" Kashmiri Hindu named Jai Ram Bhan made his way from Kashmir to Delhi and then from a Delhi bazaar to the royal court of the Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah in a matter of few days. While learning the ways of political intrigue within the Mughal palace, where Kashmiri Muslims had a large presence and were addressed as "*Khuajah*" (*Khawaja* in Persian), Jai Ram requested the royal court to address him (and other Kashmiri Hindus to follow) as a Pandit, a wish that Emperor Muhammad Shah granted in due course. Conveying an impression of a learned person, Kashmiri Hindus have universally adopted the new tag of Kashmiri Pandits since.

Kashmiri Pandits are an amalgam of multiple-layer personalities. On the one hand, they are Hindus who believe in basic tenants of the religion: *Karma, Swarag,* and *Narak*, the immortality of the soul (reincarnation), and a belief in *Bhagwan*, a higher power manifested by deities that are worshipped. Pilgrimages to holy places like Hardwar, Prayag and Kashi are deemed as desirable for absolution from sin and to revitalize personal religious identity. On the other, the Kashmiri Hindu religion also reflects attributes which are entirely local or regional in character. These are their unconditional passion for learning and scholarship, their love of nature and aesthetics, their consonance with places of worship that are in proximity of various bodies of water, their native religious rites related to the reverence of *Nilnag*, and their Shaivite faith drawn from Vedic and Tantric customs. Kashmiri myths, legends and folklore are closely associated with Kashmir's lakes, rivers, mountains, springs and streams. For example, the source of each spring or lake in the Valley is associated with *Naga* (serpent), and invariably it is not uncommon to see a *tirath* (temple or shrine) right beside it. Kalhana notes in *Rajatarangini* that Kashmir is noted for five things: learning, lofty buildings, saffron, icy waters, and grapes. He goes on to add, "Things that are difficult to find even in heaven are common here".

Kalhana may have sounded a bit effusive, but a Chinese traveler, Hieun Tsang, who visited the Valley some five centuries before Kalhana, was awestruck too

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when he met with Kashmiri Pandits. "The people of Kashmir love learning and are well-cultured. Since centuries, learning has been held in great reverence in Kashmir".

Indeed, by their intrinsic talent to become proficient in new languages and by their flexibility to deal with new cultures and vistas without hesitation, Kashmiri Pandits quickly adapted to changing ground realities as their numbers and influence began to wane. Their tenacity to survive as a miniscule ethnic race even under impossible odds, when Islam was marching into and around India, is a testament to their genius and resilience.

The Pandit identity kept evolving even before the community was reduced to a minority within Kashmir. There have to be reasons why Pandits are considered Brahmins, given that Hinduism in India evolved with an elaborate caste-based social hierarchy. Many reasons have been advanced—the most credible appears to be that with the ascent of Buddhism, all non-Brahmin castes (and possibly some Brahmins too) adopted that religion, meaning that Kashmiris of that period were either Buddhists or Brahmins and it has been argued that bearing their diminishing numbers, Kashmiri Brahmins let other local Hindu castes like *Kayasths* to merge into them, blurring the distinction of any caste identity within Pandits. With time, Buddhism diminished in the Valley, and by 638 CE it all but disappeared from the Valley. The other explanation may be that with the advent of Islam, native Kashmiri Hindus experienced a cultural and physical genocide that left very few non-Muslim survivors who were uniformly only local Brahmins, while other castes converted to Islam. Their grit and perseverance to retain their faith and culture under the impossible odds is clearly evident even today when one meets with Pandits living at "Ground Zero" in Kashmir.

The Pandit identity also kept transforming as Kashmiri Pandits moved out of the Valley. Historically, the very idea of establishing two separate orders—one being those who stayed in Kashmir during the Shah Mir dynasty rule (*Malmasis*), and those who returned (*Bhanmasis*) after the first genocide in the

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later part of the 14th Century CE, is a reflection of their proud heritage from the bravery of the former to the courage of the latter.

The Pandit character also evolved due to sociological reasons over time. During the Hindu rule, Kashmiri Pandits were primarily nurturers of their faith, who spent their time on scholarship and learning with the purpose of deepening and perpetuating their cultural heritage. Their material needs, by and large, were met by the Royal Hindu Court. An old Pandit saying, "We respect Goddess Lakshmi (Goddess of wealth), but worship Goddess Saraswati (Goddess of knowledge)", reflects the thinking of that era. With the advent of Islam, that relationship between the king and his noble Pandits was gone. Pandits, in fact, had to justify their survival under the most trying conditions. Sharda script ceased to exist after Sultan Sikandar's reign, as most Hindu texts were destroyed. The rulers were increasingly using Persian as the medium of communication within the royal Muslim court and among the masses. (Sanskrit would, however, continue to be used by well-connected Pandits through Badshah's reign and beyond, as evident from the works of the royal court chroniclers, Jonaraja and Srivara. Besides, Sanskrit had a linguistic support system that went beyond Kashmir and, therefore, could not be easily eradicated, unlike the Sharda script.) Pandits living in the Valley felt increasingly like unwanted guests in their own homeland, which had turned mostly hostile towards them. The biggest challenge was how to survive as an "infidel" in their ancestral lands, where you could lose your life if you did not tread carefully.

Again, the genius of Pandits came to the fore. In a transition that might have perhaps taken decades, most Pandits put their talent for learning new languages to work. Picking up Persian, the court language of the Shah Mir dynasty, they undertook administrative employment in the royal court and, reminiscent of the *Kayasths* of the past, became known as *Karkuns*. Those Pandits who continued with their past ritual practices and preserved the Sanskrit language were called *Bhachibhats*.

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But this development was not without consequences. Over the years, a schism developed between the two, with *Karkuns*, having lived and worked in close proximity with other religious denominations, becoming more cosmopolitan and secular in their thinking, whereas those Shaivite Hindus who followed their old ways of living retained an orthodox outlook. Yet, it must be pointed out that the two observed the same customs, although economically, they were left far behind. The cherished dream of unity among Pandits that has eluded the community so far can be traced to the divergent paths that the community followed for survival after being reduced to a minority in the Valley.

The emergence of *Karkun* class among Kashmiri Pandits was a boon to those who fled the Valley after the 14th Century CE. They were a "natural fit" in the Persian Court of Mughals and, subsequently, in the British era. Possessing the heritage of survivalists, they were educated, confident, and aggressive—outwitting most local subjects in India, and yet were respectful, pliant and loyal to their masters whosoever they may be. The *Karkun* class not only arrogated to themselves the higher positions within the social hierarchy in India but also garnered significant economic gains over competitors. Even as a miniscule minority in the Hindu heartland, they became economically better off and rose to positions of eminent power, authority and fame.

In his landmark book, *The Kashmiri Pandit*, written by Anand Koul in 1924 at the height of the British Raj in India, the author notes that "there is hardly any Indian state where a Kashmiri Pandit has not been a Prime Minister at one time or the other". Unknown to Anand Koul, then, he made a prophecy that would again come true when India became an independent nation 23 years later. Pandit Koul's book provides a galaxy of names of eminent Pandits who had achieved great accomplishments both inside and outside of Kashmir. Indeed, he did not differentiate between the two, meaning he saw those Pandits living outside Kashmir every bit as Kashmiri as those still living in the Valley.

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Survival Pathways

Now we come to the crux of the subject matter being addressed in this chapter, "Will Pandits Survive Without Their Kashmir?" First, let it be clear that Kashmir will always be a part of India, just as it has been since time immemorial.

The Anglo-US conspiracy to separate Kashmir from India goes back to the execution of the Treaty of Amritsar on 16 March 1846, when the British Government, rather than absorbing the spoils of victory over Sikhs into the Dominion of India, chose instead to sell a portion of the annexed land as a real estate deal between a commercial entity (The East India Company) and a private buyer (Maharaja Gulab Singh), assigning him ownership (to perpetuity) of an artificially carved Kingdom whose boundaries were defined by strategic and security necessities (of the British), rather than by traditional ethnic or linguistic divisions. It is not relevant to state the reasons that led Britain to make such a decision, nor how the Union of India barely managed to recover most of the Valley of Kashmir in late 1947. Suffice it to say that the Kashmir issue is a festering global concern, and it will eventually be solved with rising Indian economic and military strength but it will take time.

So, if Kashmir is not leaving the grasp of India, what happens next? This question has many answers. To begin with, let us address the historical outflows of Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley beginning in the 14th Century CE. Apart from those who returned under the amnesty and patronage extended by Sultan Zainul Abidin (*Budshah*) in the mid-15th Century CE, there have not been any significant reverse migrations of Pandits back into the Valley since. During the Mughal rule in Kashmir, which began after Emperor Akbar defeated the ruling Chak dynasty of Gilgit-Baltistan in October 1586 (and which lasted for the next 166 years), the *Karkun* Pandits took advantage of their dexterity with the Persian (Court) language and migrated to Delhi, Avadh (Lucknow), Lahore and other power centers of the Mughal dynasty. They planted their roots firmly in North and Central India, and in their zeal to

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compensate for their status as new settlers, they over-adapted to their new host environment. For example, Kashmiris, who adapted to the *Nawabi* culture of Avadh had a markedly different outlook from those affiliated with less refined Lahore Darbar. American scholar Henny Sender undertook an exhaustive research project examining the newly settled Pandits in the Northern plains of India. She stated that in changing the elements of their identity, Kashmiri Pandits were responding as much out of a sense of fear as out of a sense of reality, as much to perceived threats as to actual dangers. She concluded that **the acute insecurity of the Pandits was due, in part, to their minority status.** The Kashmiri Pandits always felt vulnerable and weak as a group that had destroyed past roots and were reluctant to grow new roots.

Sender made her research public in 1988, well before the last exodus of Kashmiri Pandits began. But those living in the Valley in 1988 or even earlier always wondered why the illustrious Kashmiri Pandits, who rose to high positions in the corridors of power in India (be it in the Mughal era, in the Sikh era, in the British era, or even closer to the present, in the Nehruvian era), never quite looked back and addressed the plight of the Pandit minority that stayed back in the Valley. Today, the same situation is repeating itself, and those who left the Valley after 1990 have shown little sympathy or concern for those left behind. This behavior is attributable to the minority complex flaw in Pandits, which sadly has not diminished over time even as they have prospered and become more self-confident in a competitive environment and social structures outside of the Valley.

It is understandable, therefore, that as Kashmiri Pandits started fleeing the Valley to the safety of the rest of India, the assimilation of newcomers with those already previously settled would take time. For example, one of the principal Kashmiri Pandit publications in the late 1800s (*Mursala-i-Kashmir*, published from Lucknow), would highlight a story in 1872 of two cliques that had evolved in the resettled Pandits in Delhi—those who migrated earlier (the "Delhi Group"), and those who had freshly arrived (the "Kashmiri Group"). In reality, it was a small clash of cultures within the same community, with prior

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settlers exhibiting cosmopolitan tastes, whereas the newcomers had an orthodox and spartan outlook reminiscent of their society in Kashmir. The pain of the newcomers was obvious in letters that appeared in the Pandit journals of the day. For example, in 1873, Ratan Lal pleaded in the *Mursala*, "If the rich could be less exhibitive in their social rituals and reduce expenses, the rest of the community would follow their model". Others were even more bitter. Autar Kishen Agha writes in another journal of the day, *Safir-i-Kashmir*, "We do not have our nationality. We have lost our language and our customs. We have only the Kashmiri name". One hundred and twenty years later, the situation was no different. Any matrimonial advertisement from the 1990s in Kashmiri journals like the *Koshur Samachar* (published by the Kashmiri Sabha, Delhi) would clearly spell out, "Newly arrived migrants are excluded".

The Census of 1921 showed a Kashmiri Pandit population of 55,052, out of which 21,035 were inhabitants of Srinagar. The records indicate that while this population had increased by 3.5% from the previous census, the corresponding increase in the Valley Muslim population was nearly 7%. The 1941 Census put the population of the Valley Hindus (mostly Pandits) at 76,868, as against the population of Muslims of over 1.7 million. The 1981 Census put the population of Pandits at 123,828 as against the population of Muslims at about 3 million. Even though I am personally aware of the incidents where the official State machinery deliberately undercounted Pandits, the fact remains that the population of Pandits had dwindled to about 5% or less before the next phase of upheaval in their lives would begin in 1986. After the exodus, the security agencies counted Pandits by each district in 1996 (just prior to the end of the Governor's Rule), and the count showed about 18,000 Pandits had borne the worst of the insurgency and stayed put in the Valley. That number, though has continued to dwindle over the years mainly due to economic hardships and a sense of insecurity; in 2022, there were about 800 Hindu households in the Valley, out of which about 500 households are Pandit families.

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However, the arrival of fresh migrants from the Valley into the plains of North India from time to time, during the Islamic and British era, either due to oppression or for their betterment, played an extremely vital role in preserving the Pandit culture away from Kashmir. They served as nourishing "gene carriers" who replenished the Pandit identity among the earlier expatriates blunted by inter-caste marriages, loss of mother tongue, and inevitable hegemonic cultural influences of the new neighborhood. Once settled in a cosmopolitan society, the old Pandit settlers, feeling an acute sense of being a minority in a land governed either by Muslim Emperors or British Viceroys, began to acquire the customs and habits of the locals. The resurgence of the Kashmiri Pandit culture fell on the shoulders of newly-arriving orthodox Hindus from the Valley, who had to struggle for assimilation and acceptance by their own community that had preceded them into the plains of India. There was a déjà vu in all this, meaning it had happened with every forced exodus of Pandits from the Valley since the 14th Century CE. Eventually, though, it has all worked out as today, Kashmiri Pandits from all districts of Kashmir have successfully spread their presence in all corners of the world.

Given the realities of the day, can this process of revitalizing Kashmiri Pandit culture still be sustained, as there are hardly any Pandits left in the Valley now, and no mass migrations are foreseeable in the near future? We will answer this question in two steps. First, we will address the situation of Pandits within Kashmir. Next, we will address the situation of Pandits outside Kashmir.

Within Kashmir, the situation of Pandits is grim these days. Recently (in 2021), the security environment in the Valley began to improve after the full integration of the Valley with India. But resurgence of targeted killings of Pandits by Islamic terrorists, supported covertly by a network of anti-national sleeper agents in the administrative bureaucracy of Kashmir, has made life difficult for the Valley ("non-migrant") Pandits. However, they have seen the worst, be it 1990 (hundreds killed, hundreds of thousands displaced), 1997 (Sangrampora and Gool massacres), 1998 (Wandhama massacre), 2003 (Nadimarg massacre), and ongoing insurgency and terrorism. Hence the

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present situation in Kashmir, alarming as it may be, is nowhere near the ferocity of violence and brutality that local Pandits have witnessed first-hand in the past. Hence, they are not likely to flee the Valley now just as they are rebuilding their lives there. The Pandit families that have stayed back will eventually grow in numbers much like the 11 clans that survived Sikandar *Bhutshikan's* butchery. Indeed, a detailed census conducted in 2010 within the Valley showed that in the prior two decades (1990-2010) 653 marriages of Pandit couples had been held in the Valley, at least 600 births had been reported, and 277 deaths had taken place. There is no question that the gloom and isolation, coupled with economic hardship, is making life miserable for Pandits in the Valley. But they are equally determined to live their lives in the land of their ancestors as guardians of their culture and faith. We should salute their perseverance and grit, and I have no doubt they will survive, just as their ancestors did for the last 700 years of extreme violence in Kashmir.

Turning to those who have left the Valley, whether in the last three decades or before—can they remain faithful to their culture and faith as they assimilate in the vastness of India, particularly if there are no new exoduses from Kashmir to revitalize the gene pool to halt a steady deterioration in Pandit culture and customs by its slow assimilation with the vastness of India?

In my view, the recent migrants do not face the same challenges that their predecessors did. For example, previous forced expulsions or migrations occurred when India was governed by foreign colonizers or their surrogates, and all Hindus in India had to adopt a cosmopolitan outlook to be successful, meaning dumbing down of Hinduism and Hindu rituals among the natives so as to not provoke the wrath of their rulers. Thus the cultural clash between the well-settled, secular old-guard Pandits and newly-arriving migrants possessing traditional or orthodox outlooks towards Kashmiri Pandit culture was inevitable. As much as the old guard Pandits initially looked down upon the newcomers, the latter provided a pipeline to retain and sustain Pandit culture among all settlers, old or new.

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So how do we replace that pipeline now? Actually, the pipeline is already in place now. These days Kashmiri Pandits are resurgent in dynamic India as India reclaims its Hindu heritage with pride and glory. The recent Pandit expatriates from the Valley are at the forefront of this movement. They are the orthodox class which is proud to retain its "old country" traditions, rituals, and customs and equally proud to publicize them. Unlike the Kashmiri Pandit expatriates from the past who arrived before India's independence (or during the Nehruvian era) and who succumbed to the desire for conformity with the cosmopolitan ruling class in the old India, the recent emigres have all the attributes honed by their ancestry to succeed in the new India and preserve their Pandit identity. The same is true for those heading to far-off lands immersing in new customs and new languages. We already know that Hinduism has flowered in foreign lands when given a chance to thrive. However, there are continuing challenges in terms of speaking Kashmiri, given that scattering of the people reduces the critical mass needed for retention of the mother tongue, compounded further by a lack of written Kashmiri. On the other hand, much of the orthodoxy has been blunted by the displacement leading to simplified religious practices, including a broader acceptance of the "Arya Samaj" approach to various rituals. I expect such changes will become more universal with time. A case in point is the Bali Island of Indonesia. Even today, you can visit Hindu temples there and hear the recitation of the *Gayatri Mantra* by a local priest. Freed from the confines of the Valley, Kashmiri Pandits are masters of their own destiny today.

Looking at the Future

Is the Kashmiri Pandit culture sustainable in India in the long run, both within and without Kashmir, given the relatively small size of the community, linguistic marginalization of the Kashmiri language, the rise of inter-community marriages, and the strong power of emerging social media that promotes secular and non-denominational thinking among the young? After all, we are now celebrating Holi, Lohri, and Basant, which were hardly considered important while living in the Valley. And a Kashmiri Pandit

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wedding in India can hardly be distinguished from a Punjabi wedding these days.

To answer the question, one has to go back into the pages of history and find instances of how *nearly identical people like Kashmiri Pandits* fared once they were forced out of their ancestral lands. It turns out that there is actually one such example which also possibly involves Hindus from Kashmir.

Ammianus Marcellinus was the Kalhana of the Roman times. A Roman soldier who was born in Syria around 330 CE, he wrote the history of the region in Latin, and several of his books have survived (English translations are available on the Amazon website). He mentions Persian conquests of the Indus Valley and the region around the Jhelum River from the 6th to 4th Century BCE (meaning prior to Alexander's entry into India) by Achaemenid Dynasty led by the great Zoroastrian Emperor, Cyrus 1, and a century later by Darius 1. Marcellinus also mentions a brief interlude by the Zoroastrian general, Hystaspes, father of Darius 1, into Kashmir with the following words:

> *"Hystaspes, a very wise monarch, the father of Darius, who, while penetrating into the remote districts of upper India, came to a certain woody retreat, of which with its tranquil silence the Brahmins, men of sublime genius, were the possessors. From their teachings, he learnt the principles of the motion of the world and of the stars, and the pure rites of sacrifice, as far as he could, which they have handed down by tradition to later ages, each instructing his own children, and adding to their own system of divination".*

The period of time is around 550 BCE. Hystaspes is mentioned in other Persian texts as an early patron of Zoroaster, the prophet of the religion that was prevalent in Persia.

New research indicates that there is a strong possibility that Prophet Zoroaster was a Kashmiri Brahmin who migrated from Kashmir to ancient Persia a few centuries before Hystaspes visited Kashmir. It is not my intent to go into those

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details here other than to say that most beliefs in Zoroastrianism, including the prominence of Fire and Sun, are similar to the Shaivite culture, and their Pantheistic approach to the supreme being is just like in Hinduism. Their religious texts, written in a script called Avesta, are the basis of Zoroastrian language called Avestan (more details are in the references noted at the end). Following the death of Prophet Mohammad in 632 CE, the Rashidun Caliphate annexed Persia, converted the nation to Islam and persecuted Zoroastrians resulting in their death and destruction. Survivors fled to India, where they would be called, and are still called, Parsees (meaning Persians).

I need not go into details of how Parsees are faring in India but remind readers that Parsees lost not only their homeland but also access to their religious shrines. But they are an extremely hardy group, highly educated, very entrepreneurial, and among the most prominent and richest communities in India, though not without some economically-disadvantaged sections within their society. They have accomplished all this even though their population is under 100,000 in a country of 1.4 billion people. They have retained their customs even as some marry outside of their faith or do not know their native language of Avestan (now written in Brahmi script and spoken with a Gujarati flair). It is very likely that Parsees, just like displaced Pandits, initially settled in various cities in India but now have coalesced mostly in and around Mumbai to ensure a critical social mass for self-preservation and survival of their faith and culture. I believe Kashmiri Pandits, too, will eventually coalesce in a select few cities in North India to preserve and sustain their culture and heritage, much like the Parsees.

Parsees are a testament to not only the plurality of India and its generous hospitality towards various religions and cultures but also proof that hard work, education and selfless service can lead a community, even when it is not native to India, to rewards in spite of being small and insular. This "worst case scenario" example is yet another proof that Pandits will do equally well or even better than Parsees in the years to come.

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Conclusion

This chapter provides a detailed response to the inquiry, "Will Pandits Survive Without Their Kashmir?" We have traced the history of how the Kashmiri Pandit personality was formed, how they gained confidence at home while acquiring dexterity and flexibility to explore new vistas and live in different cultures, and finally, how they honed their competitive spirit to develop instincts for survival in distant lands or in hostile environments. These attributes gave them abilities to play a larger-than-life role as individuals, but it has come with a cost where community interests were mostly subsumed to individual interests.

The worst is probably over for Shaivite Hindus living in the Valley. Their primary challenge is to survive economically, and the past three decades have shown that Valley Pandits have discovered ingenious ways to acquire new skills to succeed in a hostile environment. As militancy dies in Kashmir and the promised prosperity returns, Valley Pandits will grow in numbers from within. The prospect of peace will also likely attract some displaced Pandits to return, especially those belonging originally to rural areas of the Valley.

For those Kashmiri Pandits who live outside of the Valley, the bonds to their ancestral lands will never die. They will be Kashmiri Pandits first and last, and they will preserve their culture, customs and history to the best of their abilities. The first forced exodus of Parsees from their lands happened in the 7th century, whereas Shaivite Hindus were expelled from Kashmir beginning in the 14th century. Seven hundred years from now, I have no doubt that Pandits will rise to international eminence every bit as Parsees have, and the Sharda script will be revived, and Kashmiri language will be taught in all Pandit-populated schools in India. Religious and non-religious tourism of Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley will keep the diaspora emotionally connected to its roots and provide an unbroken bond to their ancient Shaivite faith and culture.

Yes, Pandits within Kashmir, and Pandits outside Kashmir, will survive and thrive for generations to come.

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Editor

Dr. Ashok Raina, originally from Kashmir, retired as a Senior Scientist from the US Department of Agriculture. He is internationally known for his monumental work on insect pheromones and hormones. He has published over 170 peer-reviewed scientific papers and received 7 patents. He is an Emeritus Gold Member and a Fellow of the Entomological Society of America. He recently published a book titled Feeling Homeless: Memoirs of a Kashmiri Scientist. He is an active member of the Kashmiri Overseas Association (KOA) in the USA and served as its President for 1994-95.

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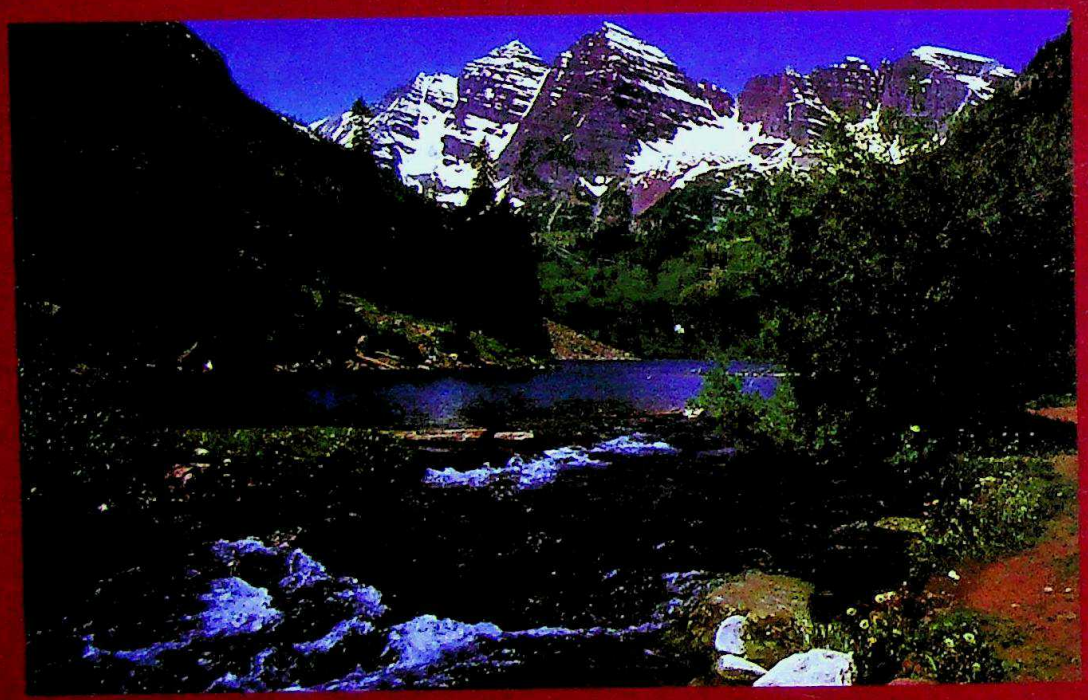
Dedicated to

All those human beings born in the beautiful valley of Kashmir who throughout its history have lost their homes and Life for no fault of theirs



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